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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF CULTURAL CONTENT SCHEMATA AND STYLE OF SPEECH ON ESL LISTENING COMPREHENSION

BY

KUO HSIAOHUNG

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1990

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "A Study of the Effects of Cultural Content Schemata and Style of Speech on ESL Listening Comprehension" submitted by Kuo Hsiaohung in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

Douglas V. Parker

(Supervisor) D. V. Parker

J. H. Young

D. J. Engel

Date: October 27, 1989

DEDICATION

To My Parents.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the separate and interactive effects of cultural content schemata and style of speech on listening comprehension ability of ESL students.

The subjects for the study were forty Chinese advanced ESL students studying at the University of Alberta. As a cross-cultural comparison, forty Canadian university students were also involved. Explicit and implicit multiple-choice questions were developed based on two spoken dialogues derived from both the Chinese and the Canadian cultures, each of which was written in both semi-formal and informal styles. The interactions among the cultural origin of the texts, the style used in them and the cultural background of the subjects were then examined. Besides the quantitative study, qualitative methods were also employed. A debriefing questionnaire and a background questionnaire were developed for both the Chinese and the Canadian subjects. A retrospective interview was conducted in some cases.

The major results obtained were the following:

1) The cultural content schemata had a significant effect on the Chinese subjects' listening comprehension on all measures, that is, they understood the dialogue based on their own culture significantly better than the one based on an unfamiliar culture.
2) The Chinese subjects understood semi-formal style of speech significantly better than informal style when measured by explicit questions and questions relating to slang and colloquialisms.
3) The Canadian subjects understood the dialogue based on their native culture significantly better than the one based on a

foreign culture. But there is no significant difference between the Canadian subjects' comprehension of informal style and of semi-formal style used both in the dialogue based on their own culture and that based on the Chinese culture. This indicates that native speakers of English have no difficulties with informal style.

4) The Chinese subjects understood the dialogue based on the Chinese culture significantly better than the Canadian subjects when measured by implicit questions. The Canadian subjects understood the dialogue based on the Canadian culture significantly better than the Chinese subjects on all the measures.

From the results, pedagogical implications were drawn for the improvement of EFL teacher education and the quality of EFL teaching materials in China. It was concluded that EFL teachers should be more familiar with the cultural expression of the group whose language they are teaching; resource materials about the target culture should be more widely used, and teaching methodology should be changed from a grammar-centered approach to a more communicative approach. Further research in the area of content schemata and style of speech is recommended.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Since China opened its doors to the outside world, more and more Chinese students have come to the University of Alberta to do research in different areas. Many of them feel that the biggest problem that they encountered when they first arrived here was their difficulty in listening comprehension. They felt that this occurred because they studied very little about the Canadian culture in China and were not familiar with people's everyday life here. This lack of cultural knowledge to some extent influenced their ability to follow a conversation.

Another problem had to do with the level of formality of speech used by Canadians speaking to them. Some students said they had problems in understanding lectures when professors used informal language. Others said that, even if informal language was not a problem for them, they had difficulty when their Canadian classmates talked with them informally after class because they were not familiar with what they were talking about, such as sports and other customs which are culture-based.

Therefore, it was felt that the effect of cultural background knowledge and of colloquial speech on the Chinese students' listening comprehension was an important issue which should be investigated through empirical study in order to find out how these two factors affect the students' listening comprehension both separately and interactively.

However, traditionally, in the study of second language comprehension, linguistic characterization of sentence structure has played an important role in formulating theories of language comprehension. As Carrell (1983) observes, this view of second language teaching has put emphasis almost exclusively on linguistic aspects of the language rather

than on the individual who uses the language. In this view, meaning is always considered to be independent of the listener or reader. Difficulties in comprehension of communication are always attributed to the learner's failure to master the linguistic aspects of language -- maybe the learner's vocabulary is not large enough or a rule of grammar has not been grasped. This emphasis on linguistic systems has overshadowed the fact that a language is a social system that is used by individuals and has taken attention away from the possible contribution of cultural background to the problem.

SCHEMA THEORY

The theoretical rationale for the present study is schema theory. Schema theory argues that comprehension is a process of interaction between the reader's or the listener's background knowledge and the text. Recent empirical research in the field of schema theory has demonstrated that the individual's contribution to the process of comprehension involves factors beyond one's linguistic knowledge. Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert and Goetz point out that "every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world" (1977, p. 369). Efficient comprehension requires the ability to link the textual material to one's existing linguistic and world knowledge. The knowledge structures that the learner brings to the text were called schemata by Anderson et al (1977) following the term used by Bartlett (1932) and Kant (1781). According to Anderson and Ortony (1975), schemata contain both knowledge itself and the information about how knowledge is to be retrieved and used.

Although there is a great deal of research concerning the role of schema theory in first and second-language reading comprehension (Carrell, 1983, 1987; Hudson, 1982; Johnson, 1981; Kintsch and Greene, 1978), there is little corresponding research evidence about the importance of schema theory in first-language listening comprehension, and even less

in second language listening comprehension. It seems very important to examine how background knowledge influences the second language learner's comprehension of the meaning of auditorily presented language, but the empirical evidence supporting this assumption is lacking. To the researcher's knowledge only one study has been done on the role of background knowledge on ESL listening comprehension. This was done by Markham and Latham (1987) who investigated the effect of religion-specific knowledge on the listening comprehension of three groups of ESL students: Christians, Moslems, and religion neutral, respectively. The results show that the students understood the passage about their own religion significantly better than the one about an unfamiliar religion. More research needs to be done to investigate the important effect of cultural schemata on ESL listening comprehension.

So far there has been little empirical research done in the area of the effect of colloquial speech on second language learners. Though Gras (1983) and Morrison (1974) have done research in the role of informal English in ESL listening comprehension, and Bonin (1978) has conducted a study on the role of colloquial French in listening comprehension for teachers of French as a second language, none of these studies looked at the combined effects of the cultural background knowledge and style of speech on ESL learners. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the interactive effect of cultural content schemata and language style on ESL listening comprehension.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A review of the related literature reveals that more research needs to be done in the area of the combined, interactive effects of cultural content schemata and style of speech on ESL listening comprehension. Therefore, based on the experience of Chinese students studying in Canada, the present

study was designed to elicit findings in response to the following questions:

1. Do cultural content schemata have an effect on ESL listening comprehension? If so, how?
2. Do different styles of speech (informal vs. semi-formal) affect ESL listening comprehension? If so, how?
3. How does style of speech interact with the cultural content schemata in ESL listening comprehension?
4. Are native speakers of English affected by cultural content schemata and style of speech of the text? If so, how do they differ from the Chinese ESL learners mentioned above?

THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The present study was designed to investigate both the effect of cultural content schemata and of style on listening comprehension. Explicit and implicit questions were developed based on texts derived from both the Chinese and the Canadian cultures, each of which was written in both semi-formal and informal styles. The interactions among the cultural knowledge presupposed by a text, the listeners' own background knowledge, and style of speech were then examined.

Forty Chinese students and forty Canadian students studying in the University of Alberta were chosen as subjects. Two written dialogues of approximately 500 words each based on a different culture (the Canadian culture vs. the Chinese culture) were developed for the study. Two versions (informal style vs. semi-formal style) were written for each dialogue and half of the Chinese students and half of the Canadian students listened to the informal version of each dialogue and the other half listened to the semi-formal version. The order of presentation of the two dialogues was designed to control order effects. The subjects listened to and answered 20 multiple-choice comprehension questions immediately following the

presentation of each dialogue. The tests contained two types of questions (10 explicit and 10 implicit, with five of the explicit questions designed to measure comprehension of slang and colloquialisms). The resulting data were then analyzed in order to test the following hypotheses:

1. The Chinese subjects will comprehend the dialogue based on the Chinese culture significantly better than the one based on the Canadian culture.
2. The Chinese subjects will perform significantly better on the semi-formal style than on the informal style.
3. The Canadian subjects will comprehend the dialogue based on the Canadian culture significantly better than the one based on the Chinese culture.
4. The Canadian subjects will perform equally well both on the semi-formal style and on the informal style.
5. The Chinese subjects will comprehend the dialogue based on the Chinese culture significantly better than the Canadian subjects.
6. The Canadian subjects will comprehend the dialogue based on the Canadian culture significantly better than the Chinese subjects.

These hypotheses were proposed in order to answer the research questions. The first two hypotheses will answer the first, second and third questions. The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth hypotheses will answer the fourth question.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. It is assumed that schema theory plays an equally important role in second-language listening comprehension as in second-language reading comprehension. As Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) point out, "the role of background knowledge in language comprehension has been formalized as schema theory which has as one of its fundamental tenets that text, any text, either spoken or written, does not by itself carry meaning. Rather, according to schema theory, a text only provides directions for listeners or readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own, previously acquired knowledge." Thus, the exploration of the significant role of schema theory in listening comprehension forms the basis of the present study.

2. Although the Chinese subjects were chosen as much as possible from students having the same level of English language proficiency on the basis of their TOEFL score, their actual language proficiency may vary from person to person. With this reservation, the subjects are assumed to possess approximately the same level of command of English.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

If the hypotheses are supported by the research findings, then we may be able to draw significant pedagogical implications from them. Since support for the hypotheses would reveal that cultural schemata play an important role in listening comprehension, the implication for ESL teachers would be that they should appreciate that what ESL learners bring to a text is often culture bound. Sometimes their failure to show correct understanding of a text should not be attributed just to their language deficiency but also to their failure to activate appropriate cultural schemata or to the fact that they do not possess the relevant schemata.

Our long-range goal is to develop students' independent communicative ability outside the classroom. What makes classroom activities important is their applicability to the real world. Each piece of specific information dealt with in the classroom will provide an opportunity to build new cultural schemata that will be useful for the students outside the classroom. Building proper cultural schemata is especially important for those students who study abroad in the target culture, since building cultural schemata may be the key to their success in coping with the new environment and, in turn, a key to success in their academic study.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. According to Carrell (1987), cultural schemata includes content schemata and formal schemata which refer to prior knowledge of content and text structure respectively. The present study will deal only with content schemata and examine how they, interacting with the style of speech, affect ESL listening comprehension.

2. A second delimitation is that the study was restricted to students studying at the university level and cannot be generalized to the school population as a whole.

3. A third delimitation is that only Chinese ESL students were studied. Results might be different for other populations.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Because the topics of the listening text in the study are strictly controlled, the material will consist of written dialogues read into a tape-recorder rather than spontaneous speech. As a result, visual cues would be absent. Every effort was made, however, to ensure that the

dialogues sounded as natural as possible.

2. Since most Chinese subjects were graduate students, it would have been ideal to collect data from Canadian graduate students as well. However, because the data were collected at the time when students were busy with their final-term exams, it was impossible to collect data from 40 Canadian graduate students. Therefore, for the Canadian subjects, most of the data were collected from third or fourth-year undergraduate science or engineering students. Only four Canadian graduate students were involved in this study.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Culture: "The patterned ways of life of a group of people", which represents the anthropological concept of culture as distinguished from the artistic achievement concept of culture (Tardif, 1978, p. 7).

Content schemata: A reader's or listener's background knowledge relative to the content area of a text (Carrell, 1987, p. 461).

Formal schemata: Background knowledge which the reader or listener uses to deal with the formal, rhetorical and organizational structure of a text (Carrell, 1987, p. 461).

Dialogue: "A conversation between two or more persons" (Webster, 1976). According to Dobson (1980), "a dialogue is a *social* unit of speech. Because it involves two speakers, it furnishes students with a social context in which to practice the new language. This makes the language 'come alive'" (p. 278).

Comprehension: The understanding which involves the reader's or listener's cognitive interaction with a written or spoken message as he or she uses appropriate processing strategies to achieve a match between his or her linguistic and world knowledge and the linguistic and world background of the text.

Incomplete T-unit: "A group of words which do not form a complete independent clause but which are necessary to the ongoing flow of language. It may be lacking a subject, verb or complement or any combination of these" (Fagan, 1978, p. 202).

T-unit: One main clause plus any subordinate clause or nonclausal structure that is attached to or embedded in it (Hunt, 1970, p. 188).

Style of speech: The degree of formality in speech. According to Joos (1967), there are five styles of speech: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate. In this study, two styles are dealt with, that is, consultative and casual, or semi-formal and informal.

Explicit questions: Questions designed to test the listener's understanding of factual content of the text.

Implicit questions: Questions to test the listener's global understanding of the text and understanding of the extension of culturally appropriate information in the text. Each question requires the listener to combine the factual information in the text with his or her own cultural background knowledge.

FORMAT OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study. The theoretical rationale is also presented. The design of the study is introduced and research questions are raised. Chapter Two will review the literature which is related to the present study. Chapter Three will describe the design of the study in detail, and Chapter Four will present the results of the study. Conclusions and implications will be drawn in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

While there are many studies on the importance of schema theory for first and second language reading comprehension, a review of the literature reveals that research on the role of schema theory in second language listening comprehension is lacking. Despite this, a review of the studies on schema theory for second language reading comprehension may give some insight into the role of schema theory in listening comprehension.

According to Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), recent empirical research on schema theory in first and second language reading comprehension can be classified into Content Schemata, Formal Schemata, and Content/Formal Schemata Confounded. This section of the study will concentrate on research in content schemata related to second language and second culture.

RESEARCH ON CULTURAL CONTENT SCHEMATA

Bartlett (1932) made one of the early reports on the effect of cultural schemata on comprehension. He observed how Englishmen read and recalled stories based on North American Indian folk tales and recognized the cultural differences in their processing of the texts. Fifty years later, Kintsch and Greene (1978) conducted a similar study. They presented American students with two stories, one a Grimm's fairy tale, and the other an Apache (American Indian) folk tale. Results from recall protocols indicated that American students had a better understanding of the Brothers Grimm story than of the Apache story.

While these studies on cultural comprehension reveal how cultural schemata affect comprehension, they did not investigate how language proficiency interacts with the cultural content schemata. The following

studies examined these factors.

RESEARCH ON CULTURAL CONTENT SCHEMATA IN SECOND LANGUAGE READING COMPREHENSION

Steffensen, Joag-Dev, and Anderson (1979) conducted a study in which they asked American and East Indian university students to read two letters in English, each describing an American and an Indian wedding. Both cultural groups read their own native passage more rapidly and produced culturally more appropriate elaborations. When reading the foreign passage, they made more distortions. This finding demonstrates that, when implicit cultural background knowledge presupposed by a text interacts with the reader's own cultural background knowledge, it makes texts based on a familiar culture easier to comprehend than syntactically equivalent texts based on an unfamiliar culture. The significance of this study is twofold: 1) By using two groups of subjects with different cultural heritages and two passages, the research design of the study is more complete than that of Kintsch and Greene study (1978) in which only one cultural group of subjects was used; 2) This is one of the early studies to examine the role of cultural content schemata on reading comprehension of speakers of English as a second language.

Carrell (1981) compared advanced ESL Japanese and Chinese subjects on recall of English versions of folk tales from their native culture, (Japanese or Chinese, respectively), second culture (Western European/English), and a totally unfamiliar culture (American Indian). Results indicate that the cultural origin of the texts interacted with the subjects' familiarity with the text based on their own culture and unfamiliarity with the texts based on the second or foreign culture to affect their recall of information from the texts. The subjects' judgments of the level of difficulty of these texts also reflected this interaction.

Johnson (1981) examined the role of cultural content schemata on reading comprehension of ESL Iranian university students. The findings reveal that the linguistic complexity of a text has less effect on ESL reading comprehension than its cultural origin does. Iranian ESL students and American students were asked to read Iranian and American folk tales written in English. Half of the subjects in each cultural group read the simplified versions of both stories. The other half read the unadapted, or syntactically more complex versions of the same stories. Explicit and implicit multiple-choice questions and free recall writing were used to test subjects' reading comprehension. The results of the study indicate that (1) the Iranian students performed better on the Iranian story than on the American story. (2) There were no significant differences in their performance between the syntactically simplified and unsimplified versions of the Iranian story. (3) Native speakers of English were affected by both the cultural origin and the language complexity of the texts.

Johnson's later study (1982) investigated the effect of prior cultural experience on advanced ESL students' reading comprehension of a text about the celebration of Halloween. Just before the testing took place, the students had experienced such a celebration. The text contained both familiar and unfamiliar (historical) information about the custom. Statistical analysis of the data indicated that ESL students recalled more propositions from the familiar information than from the unfamiliar information in the passage. In addition, four different treatments concerning vocabulary exposure did not produce any significant effect on recall.

Hudson (1982) conducted a study on the effects of induced schemata on ESL reading comprehension. In this study three levels of ESL university students were used, beginning level, intermediate level, and advanced level. Reading passages were presented to subjects using three methods of intervention. In the first method of intervention, subjects read a passage,

took a multiple-choice reading comprehension test, read the passage again and took the test again. The second type of intervention involved a vocabulary list which was presented to subjects prior to reading after which subjects were tested. In the third method, pictures about the topic of the passage were shown to subjects who were then asked to write predictions about the passage which they were going to read. The results of the study show that the facilitating effect of externally induced schemata is greater on beginning and intermediate level subjects than on advanced level subjects in their reading comprehension. The results also indicate that language proficiency is not a static but a relative proficiency and that content-induced schemata can compensate for ESL students' limitations in language proficiency.

Research by Carrell (1983) further demonstrated the interactive nature of language and content schemata in second-language reading. Carrell examined the effects of three aspects of background knowledge (context, transparency, and familiarity) on reading comprehension of three groups of readers (native English speakers, advanced ESL readers, and high intermediate ESL learners). The results of the study show significant effects of the three variables of background knowledge on the reading comprehension of both native and ESL readers. This study provides further support for the schema-theoretical view that second language reading is an interactive process between the text and the reader.

Thus, it would appear that background knowledge of culture-specific information presupposed by a text affects comprehension of that text. Based on this conclusion, the following research is related to the pedagogical question of whether students' reading can be improved by helping them build culturally specific background knowledge on a topic prior to reading.

PEDAGOGICAL RESEARCH ON CULTURAL CONTENT SCHEMATA

Some pedagogical research has been done in English as a first language. Au (1979) reported that minority children's comprehension improved when they were taught using the experience-text-relationship method (ETR) which helped them to link past experience to reading material. With this method, prior to reading a story, the teacher helps the children talk about their own experiences which are related to the story. After this first step is accomplished, the teacher has children read parts of the story and asks questions about the content. Then the teacher helps the children draw a relationship between their background knowledge and the content of the text. Au concluded that the ETR method can greatly facilitate the reading comprehension of minority children when the child's own world and the world of school are linked by the use of ETR.

Some relevant research has been done in ESL on the question of whether teaching of appropriate cultural background knowledge significantly improves reading comprehension. Gatboton and Tucker (1971) conducted a study which showed that Filipino high school students misunderstood American short stories because they brought their own cultural values, attitudes, and judgments into their reading. To find out if provision of more appropriate cultural orientation could improve the students' comprehension, the approach of "cultural contrastive analysis" was used to teach one group of the Filipino students. After this training the reading comprehension of this group of students greatly improved and they performed in the test more like American students than the group of Filipino students who had not received the training.

Floyd and Carrell (1987) conducted a pedagogical study in which pre-and posttests were designed for both experimental and control groups of ESL students. Half of each group read a syntactically more difficult version of the test passage about the Fourth of July celebration in Boston.

The other half read a syntactically less difficult version of the passage. The subjects were ESL students who had never experienced a Fourth of July celebration before the test took place. The experimental group received training about appropriate cultural background information between the pretest and the posttest. Carrell found that the training-experimental group performed significantly better than the control group which had not received training and that there were no significant differences between the syntactically difficult and the syntactically easy versions of the posttest. The results of this study indicate that providing students with appropriate background knowledge can result in improvement in reading comprehension and that the level of syntactic complexity has no significant effect on ESL students' reading comprehension.

RESEARCH ON CULTURAL CONTENT SCHEMATA AND LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Compared with research on reading comprehension, corresponding research on listening comprehension is lacking. There are only a few studies on the role of schema theory in first-language listening comprehension and even less on second-language listening comprehension. Steffensen and Colker (1982) conducted a study presenting American and Australian aboriginal subjects with two listening passages, one about the medical beliefs of the American culture, the other about the medical beliefs of the Australian aboriginal culture. The results of their oral recall protocols show that subjects have a better grasp of materials from their own culture and make culturally more appropriate elaborations about it.

Pratt, Krane, and Kendall (1981) conducted two experiments on the effect of schemata on first-language reading and listening comprehension. Subjects were presented with two ambiguous passages (card/music vs. prisoner/wrestler), each of which had two versions, dominant cue version

(card or prisoner) and nondominant cue version (music or wrestler). The results show that the paralinguistic stress cues (italics and intonation) can trigger schemata related either to the dominant cue version or nondominant cue version of the two ambiguous texts and can affect subjects' choice of frameworks in comprehending the texts.

Markham and Latham (1987) conducted a study on the effect of religion-specific background knowledge on adult ESL listening comprehension. Three groups of subjects were used: one group of Moslems, one group of Christians, and one religion-neutral group. Subjects listened to two passages, one about prayer rituals of Islam and the other about the prayer rituals of Christianity. The results of the study showed that Christian subjects recalled more idea units from the Christian passage than did the Moslems or neutral subjects. The Moslem subjects achieved higher scores than the Christian subjects or neutral subjects on the Moslem passage. This indicates that the schema theory plays an import role in ESL listening comprehension.

RESEARCH ON THE ROLE OF COLLOQUIAL SPEECH

So far there is very little empirical research concerning the role of informal/colloquial speech in second language listening comprehension. The empirical study done by S. M. Gras (1983) investigated difficulties that second language learners encounter in comprehending informal speech in English. In this study seventy-nine Korean graduate students attending the University of Texas took listening comprehension tests which measured proficiency in informal and formal spoken English. The findings show that subjects performed significantly better on formal style than on informal style because of syntactic and phonological reduction, and that the use of slang and colloquialisms made the informal style more difficult to comprehend for ESL learners. With attitude questionnaires and analysis

using Pearson product-moment correlational analysis, it was found that proficiency in informal, but not in formal style was directly related to a higher integrative attitude for liberal arts majors and women.

Other empirical research on the role of colloquial speech has been done by Therese M. Bonin (1978), who investigated the comprehension problems of teachers of French as a second language when they encountered the informal, everyday use of French. Bonin used a listening comprehension test of colloquial French and a listening comprehension test of standard/formal French. Subjects achieved significantly higher scores on the test of standard French than those obtained on the test of colloquial French.

The study done by J. W. Morrison (1974) investigated the problems in listening comprehension encountered by overseas students in science in the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. From the questionnaire, Morrison found that the foreign students reported to have more difficulties with informal lectures than with formal lectures.

SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed studies which have been done on the role of schema theory in first language and second language reading and listening comprehension. Studies which examined the effect of colloquial speech on second language listening comprehension have also been reviewed. The results of the studies on schema theory show that the cultural background knowledge presupposed by a text has a significant effect on both ESL learners and native speakers' reading and listening comprehension when interacting with the reader's or listener's own cultural background knowledge. The results of the studies on the effect of style of speech on language comprehension indicate that informal style is more difficult than formal style for second language learners. The review

of these studies has provided both theoretical and practical foundations for the present study.

Practically no research has been done on the combined effects of style of speech and the role of cultural schemata in second-language listening comprehension. Therefore, there is a need to explore the roles of and the interactive effects of these two factors on second-language listening comprehension.

CHAPTER 3
METHOD OF RESEARCH

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The research instruments consisted of:

a) two tape-recorded dialogues, one dealing with the Chinese culture and the other dealing with the Canadian culture.
b) twenty multiple-choice questions testing comprehension of each dialogue referred to in a) above.
c) a debriefing questionnaire for both the Chinese and the Canadian subjects.
d) specific background questionnaires for the Chinese and Canadian subjects.
e) a retrospective interview with some of the Chinese subjects.

Development of Listening Materials: Dialogues

Two dialogues were written by the researcher for the purpose of the research, each dealing with a different culture. Dialogue One, based on the Chinese culture, dealt with the Chinese New Year (or the Spring Festival). Dialogue Two, based on the Canadian Culture, was about Easter. Each dialogue was written with two different versions, one in informal or casual style (Joos, 1967) and the other in semi-formal or consultative style (Joos, 1967) (See Appendix A).

The Rationale behind the Format of the Listening Materials

There are several reasons for choosing the dialogue as the format for the test instrument for this research. In her article "Dialogues: Why,

When, and How to Teach Them," Dobson (1980) points out that "A dialogue is a social unit of speech. Because it involves two speakers, it furnishes students with a social context in which to practice the new language. This makes the language 'come alive'" (p. 278). In daily life people listen to conversations more often than to narratives or spoken prose. In previous studies on the effect of cultural content schemata on listening comprehension most researchers have just used ready-made prose or short stories as testing materials. The present researcher felt that only by using dialogues could the validity and reliability of the testing instrument be established.

The Rationale behind the Content Chosen for the Listening Materials

Since the main purpose of this research was to examine the effect of cultural content schemata on listening comprehension, the content of the listening materials dealt with the Eastern and the Western cultures respectively. The essence of a culture tends to be reflected most in people's everyday life and their customs, i.e., culture with a small "c" as distinguished by Politzer (1971) from culture with a capital "C". The latter refers to the artistic-literary achievements of a group of people, whereas the former represents the shared behaviour or patterned ways of life of the individuals of a community. Since holidays and festivals can reflect patterned ways of life in many respects, such as food, clothing, decoration and holiday symbols, the researcher has chosen two festivals as the topic of the dialogues. The researcher's experience and familiarity with the Chinese culture was the main reason for the selection of a topic from the Chinese culture in one of the dialogues and thus for the selection of Chinese students as subjects. Since the subjects involved in the study were Chinese students and Canadian students respectively, it was decided to base the dialogues on the Spring Festival (the Chinese New Year) and on Easter. The Spring

Festival is the most popular and most elaborately celebrated festival in mainland China. Although China is a big country, and the ways in which people celebrate this festival vary from place to place, there are certain customs in common, such as watching the Holiday Special on TV on New Year's Eve, eating a family reunion dinner, giving the house a thorough cleaning before the festival, visiting relatives and friends, decorating the house with red paper, some with papercuts and some with the Chinese character for "luck". Since some of the subjects were from the northern part of mainland China and some from the southern part, the dialogue was written to embrace the most common features shared by most people in China, although the setting of the dialogue was in Harbin in the northeastern part of China.

The second dialogue was about Easter*, which is one of the more commonly celebrated holidays in the Western World. Since Canada is a multi-cultural society, many people originate from various countries in Europe. Therefore, since the researcher felt it very important to choose a holiday which is shared by most Canadians, Easter was chosen. Another reason for choosing Easter was that the researcher wanted to make sure that the holiday chosen would be one which had never been experienced by the Chinese subjects in Canada before the data was collected. This would be possible since Easter would not be familiar to the Chinese subjects before they came to Canada. Only in this way could the researcher examine how familiar and unfamiliar cultural content affected the listening comprehension of Chinese ESL students and Canadian students who are native speakers of English.

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* It is recognized that the Spring Festival dialogue is secular while the Easter dialogue has a religious component. It would have been ideal to have had two dialogues, each of secular content. Originally the researcher planned to compare Thanksgiving with the Spring Festival. Since the Chinese students had already experienced this holiday at the time when the data was collected, this holiday could not be used.

The Informal Version

The lengths of the informal version of each dialogue were similar. The informal version of the dialogue about the Spring Festival consisted of 497 words and the informal version of the dialogue about Easter had 510 words. They were also similar in syntactic difficulty, as measured by T-units (Hunt 1970) and incomplete T-units for oral language developed by Fagan (1978). A T-unit is one main clause plus any subordinate clause or nonclausal structure such as a phrase that is attached to or embedded in it (Hunt, 1970). An incomplete T-unit is "a group of words which do not form a complete independent clause but which are necessary to the ongoing flow of language. It may be lacking a subject, verb or complement or any combination of these" (Fagan, 1978, p. 202). The informal version of the Spring Festival dialogue had T-units and incomplete T-units whose average length was 8.4 while the T-units and incomplete T-units of the Easter dialogue averaged 8.2 words. The level of semantic difficulty was controlled by word frequency for ESL students developed by West (1953). The Spring Festival dialogue was 2 minutes and 45 seconds, and the Easter dialogue was 2 minutes and 30 seconds in length. The speed of the Spring Festival dialogue was 3.0 words per second, while the speed of the Easter dialogue was 3.4 words per second. The Spring Festival dialogue was about 15 seconds slower than the Easter dialogue because one of the speaker hesitated before reading three unfamiliar Chinese words. Except for these three words, the rest of the Spring Festival dialogue was read at the same speed as that of the Easter dialogue.

In the informal version, every effort was made to include in the two dialogues the most important features of colloquial English. In his article "Real People Don't Talk Like Books" Engkent (1986) identified important characteristics of informal spoken English including: reduction of unstressed sounds, ellipsis of words, hesitation markers, subject-verb

disagreement, modifiers (adjectives used as adverbs), slang and idioms. Gras (1978) identified three main features of colloquial English: phonological reduction, syntactic reduction, and use of slang and colloquialisms. The following is a description of the main features of colloquial English reflected in the informal version of each dialogue.

1) Pronunciation

Informal speech in English is characterized by reductions of sounds. Some vowels drop or reduce to schwa, and some sounds change or blur (Engkent, 1986). Therefore, the dialogues were written with reduction of sounds in many words, such as "gonna" for "going to", "wanna" for "want to", "didya" for "did you", "catchya" for "catch you", "'em" for "them", "'cause" for "because", "an'" for "and". When the two speakers read the dialogues into the tape-recorder, they were told to feel free to drop any sound in any word according to the way they normally talk in order to make the reading sound as much as possible like informal daily conversation.

2) Syntax

In speech, people tend to make ellipsis, or in Engkent's words (1986), they "take short-cuts." To reflect this feature, the informal version of each dialogue was written with ellipsis of the subject in some places, such as "(It) Sounds neat!", "(We) Burnt out to a farm," "(They) turned out fantastic," "(They) Look like dumplings," "(It) Must of been incredible."

3) Lexicon

The informal version of each dialogue included two prominent

lexical features of informal style: slang and colloquialisms. It is not always easy to tell the difference between slang and colloquialisms. Some slang expressions have been accepted by most people and have become colloquialisms. Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1976) makes a more precise distinction between the two:

> Colloquialism An expression considered more appropriate to familiar conversation than to formal speech or to formal writing (slang words frequently rise to the rank of colloquialisms --- G.L. Kittredge).
>
> Slang A non-standard vocabulary composed of words ... characterized primarily by connotations of extreme informality, and usually a currency not limited to a particular region, and composed typically of coinage or arbitrarily changed words, clipped or shortened forms, extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech or verbal novelties usually experiencing quick popularity and relatively rapid decline into disuse.

There are other differences between the two categories. Slang is not used by everyone, while colloquialisms are usually used in informal speech (Pei and Gaynor 1954, p. 41). In addition, colloquialisms are relatively stable while slang is usually short-lived. The informal version of each dialogue in this study was written with a similar number of colloquialisms and slang expressions. The informal version of the Spring Festival dialogue consisted of 20 expressions using colloquialisms and slang, and the informal version of the Easter dialogue had 21 expressions employing colloquialisms and slang. Such colloquialisms as "packed like sardines," "sounds great," "pick up" for "buy," "fix up" for "decorate" were used.

A certain amount of slang was used in the informal version, for

instance, "couch potatoes", "like crazy", "neat", "real" used as adverb, and "split for home," "hang around," "It was a blast" and so on.

The Semi-formal Version

According to Troike (1971) semi-formal style is generally used in semi-formal communication situations. Because of the status differences between the communicants there is less use of slang, less ellipsis, and less pronunciation reduction. The semi-formal version of the dialogues in this study was constructed to reflect the above features of semi-formal style.

Like the informal versions, the semi-formal versions of the two dialogues were also controlled for their length and level of syntactic and semantic difficulties. The semi-formal version of the Spring Festival dialogue consisted of 543 words, and that of the Easter dialogue contained 516 words. The semi-formal version of the Spring Festival dialogue had T-units and incomplete T-units whose average length was 8.6 words while those of the Easter dialogue averaged 8.3 words. The length of time for the Spring Festival dialogue was 2 minutes and 55 seconds and for the second dialogue 2 minutes and 30 seconds. The speed of the Spring Festival dialogue was 3.1 words per second and the speed of the Easter dialogue was 3.4 words per second, with the latter slightly faster than the former. Although efforts were made by the speakers to keep the two dialogues at the same speed, the speakers' unfamiliarity with the pronunciation of some Chinese words resulted in a slowing down of the speed in some places.

Development of the Test Questions

The following will describe briefly the process for developing the test questions and the rationale for choosing the format for test instruments' multiple-choice questions as well as the guidelines for constructing these

questions.

Test Format

The first problem in designing the listening tests was choosing an appropriate format. Several test formats were considered, including written recall, oral recall, true-false questions, and multiple choice questions. The first two formats didn't appear to be as appropriate as the last two. In previous research on listening comprehension concerning the role of schema theory, a short story or a prose passage was used (See Markham and Latham 1987), and written recall was the format of testing. This kind of measure has its disadvantages:

1. Listening comprehension is measured through another medium, writing. Those who listen well do not necessarily write well or vice versa.
2. For the present study, written recall is even less suitable because a dialogue instead of a narrative was used as the content. For one thing, it is difficult to analyze the dialogue into idea units in order to measure subjects' recall. It is also difficult for subjects to recall a dialogue as it is heard because there are some digressions and non-information sentences.
3. Written recall of a relatively long dialogue will make the task too imposing for subjects and will take much more time for the subjects to complete than answering multiple choice questions.

Oral recall also has disadvantages. Although oral recall is sometimes used with children who are native speakers, it is not very suitable for adult second language learners for the following reasons:

1. The individual's level of spoken English varies from person to

person. Although proficiency in speaking English is related to proficiency in listening comprehension, they are not identical skills.

2. With oral recall, affective factors may influence the results. Such factors as fear of making errors because of limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, or lack of grammatical knowledge may create difficulties for subjects in undertaking the oral recall task.

The multiple choice test also has disadvantages. As Harris (1969) points out, the reading factor is involved in the test because choices are often printed. To overcome this disadvantage, an effort should be made to keep the choices as lexically and grammatically simple as possible. Another criticism is that there may be a high possibility of guessing correctly on a multiple-choice test. The choices may provide clues which help the subject to guess correctly. This weakness can be overcome if care is taken to eliminate such clues.

Guidelines for Constructing Questions and Choices in the Test

A set of guidelines for constructing choices was set up based on a review of the theoretical and practical literature of test construction for second language teaching.

1) Stimulus Questions

a) Stimulus questions should be spoken at the same speed which the dialogues used.
b) Stimulus questions should be as short as possible, ideally nine words in the foreign language (FL) and fifteen in the native language (NL) (Rivers, 1978).

2) Choices

a) Choices should be brief and sentences should be lexically and grammatically simple to minimize the reading factor (Harris 1969, p. 37).
b) Subjects should have enough time to read the choices and record their answers (Lado 1961, p. 215).
c) For implicit questions, distracters should include culturally inappropriate extensions or distortions of the information given in the dialogue, including some answers based on the opposite cultural group (Carrell 1987, p. 468).
d) The correct choice should clearly be the best option (Lado 1961, p. 210).
e) The correct choice should be the same length as the distracters (Heaton 1975, p. 121).
f) The correct choice should not be too obvious.
g) For implicit questions, the correct choice should be a culturally appropriate extension of the information given in the dialogue (Carrell 1987, p. 468).

The Resulting Explicit and Implicit Multiple Choice Questions

Based on the above guidelines, twenty multiple-choice questions were constructed for each dialogue. Each question was followed by five choices: one correct choice and four distracters. The first ten were "explicit questions" designed to test the subjects' understanding of the explicit, factual content of the dialogues. The remaining ten questions which were implicit in nature, were designed to test the subjects' understanding of implicit information or of the inferential information of the dialogues (See Appendix A).

1) Explicit Questions

Explicit questions in this study were equivalent to textually explicit questions which were defined by Pearson and Johnson (1978) as questions that are directly answered in the text (p. 157).

Five of the ten explicit questions were designed to test the subjects' understanding of the colloquialisms and slang appearing in the informal version of each dialogue. The same questions were asked in the semi-formal version of each dialogue in order to see whether there would be any difference in the subjects' performance with the less informal language.

2) Implicit Questions

A set of ten implicit questions was developed for each dialogue. These questions were inferential questions based on: 1) global understanding of the dialogues. 2) understanding of the extension of culturally appropriate information in the dialogue. Each question required the listener to make use of both the factual information in the dialogues and his or her cultural background knowledge. These questions were equivalent to scriptally implicit questions which were defined by Pearson and Johnson (1978) as questions that require the reader or listener to integrate information from the text with his or her own prior knowledge. These questions were also similar to Carrell's (1987) comprehension- inference questions.

The implicit questions were constructed on the basis of the model provided by Carrell (1987): 1) The correct answer contained culturally appropriate extensions of the content of the dialogues; 2) Distracters included culturally inappropriate extensions or distortions of the content of the dialogues, including some choices based on the opposite cultural group.

Recording of the Listening Materials and Test Questions

To check the acceptability to native speakers of the four versions, they were submitted to a panel of native speakers including a specialist in second language education. Based on feedback from the panel, the dialogues were revised.

After the informal and semi-formal versions of the two dialogues had been revised several times, both the dialogues and questions were recorded. They were read into a tape recorder with an external microphone by two Canadians who were native speakers of English, one male and the other female. Care was taken to eliminate all extraneous noise. In order to insure the reliability and authenticity of the listening materials, the speakers were advised to try their best to make the reading sound like casual conversation as much as possible by using paralinguistic features, such as "um... ah.." etc. The test questions, which were also recorded by the same male speaker, were recorded so that a ten-second pause followed each question so that the subjects were given ample time to make their choice. Later the recording was judged by several native speakers of English and found to sound natural.

Debriefing Questionnaire

A two-page debriefing questionnaire for both the Chinese and the Canadian subjects was developed to elicit relevant information from the subjects with respect to their rating of the degree of their prior familiarity with the information in the text (on a 1 to 5 scale), and rating of the difficulty of grammar, vocabulary, content and the overall organization of the two dialogues (on 1 to 5 scale) following Carrell's model (1987). The questionnaire also sought information about which dialogue the subjects found more difficult and the reasons for this (see Appendix B).

Background Questionnaire

Questionnaire for the Chinese Subjects

This questionnaire was designed to elicit information from the Chinese subjects in three areas.

Part One was designed to elicit general information regarding the individuals' status, that is, in which program of study they were enrolled, their field of study, and the length of their residence in Canada. Part Two, the main body of this questionnaire, sought information about the individuals' experience with English language study in China. In this part, details were requested as to the length and type of formal English study and the methodology used in English language classes in China in which they had participated as students. Emphasis was placed on information about the study of Western culture in English classes in China, on the extent of the individuals' exposure to English, both in informal and in formal environments, especially exposure to colloquial speech in their foreign language learning. The last part of the questionnaire sought information about the Chinese subjects' difficulties in listening comprehension which they encountered when they first arrived in Canada and what problems they still have (see Appendix C).

Questionnaire for the Canadian Subjects

The questionnaire for the Canadian subjects was much briefer than the one for the Chinese subjects. The questionnaire was mainly designed to elicit three types of information:

1. general information regarding the subjects' academic status.
2. an assessment of the subjects' prior knowledge of the Chinese culture.

3. the subjects' own cultural background (see Appendix D).

Interview

Retrospective interview techniques similar to those described by Hosenfeld (1976) and employed by Markham and Latham (1987) were used in this study. These techniques were used to obtain "informal student descriptions of their language behavior with minimum amount of structured elicitation and little external intervention by the investigator" (Markham and Latham 1987). Hosenfeld (1976) advises that each question given by the interviewer should largely be determined by the learner's response to the previous question. This subject-generated data can be gathered retrospectively shortly after the subjects have completed the task.

ADMINISTRATION OF INSTRUMENTS

Pilot Study and Validation of Research Instruments

After all of the research instruments described in the previous section had been designed, they were pilot tested.

The purpose of the pilot study was to ensure the validity and reliability of the test instrument. Before the pilot test, the comprehension tests were presented to both native speakers of English and to Chinese graduate students. Native speakers were asked to judge whether the informal version of each dialogue was written in typical everyday colloquial English. Both groups were encouraged to point out misleading questions and choices. After the dialogues and the multiple-choice questions had been revised several times, they were pilot tested.

Twenty Chinese science-major graduate students who had been studying in the University of Alberta for one year and four Canadian

science-major students volunteered for the pilot test. The study was carried out individually. Each student listened to two dialogues, one talking about the Chinese culture -- Spring Festival and the other about the Canadian culture -- Easter. After listening to each dialogue, they were given ten explicit and ten implicit multiple-choice questions to answer. Then a debriefing questionnaire and a background questionnaire were filled out.

The results of the pilot study were as follows. Although the Chinese subjects had experienced Easter in Canada, they still had problems in comprehending the dialogue based on this festival. Their performance on the dialogue about the Chinese culture was much better than on the Easter dialogue. Through the debriefing questionnaire, they reported that they were not familiar with Easter, since, even though they had been in Canada during the Easter season, they had not participated in this celebration. In the two dialogues, because the names of Easter and the Spring Festival were mentioned, some Chinese subjects reported that because they were very familiar with the Spring Festival, they could answer many questions without listening to the whole dialogue. Most of them found the speed of the dialogue on the Chinese culture slower than the one on Easter. Some found some items in the questionnaires were not clear enough and were open to different interpretations.

As a result of the problems found in the pilot study, some changes were made for the main study.

1. The names of the holidays were deleted from the two dialogues so as to avoid the danger of subjects being able to answer questions without listening to the whole dialogue.
2. Some regionally-specific aspects of the Spring Festival which were unfamiliar to some Chinese students were deleted and more familiar ones were added. For example, the Dragon Gate and Dragon Palace, ice sculptures, Dragon Boats were found to be unfamiliar to some Chinese students. Although they had heard of

them or had seen them on TV, they had never seen them with their own eyes. As a result, they were omitted from the dialogue and more familiar aspects were elaborated, such as the special TV program on New Year's Eve, eating dumplings, grocery shopping, decoration of homes, and the making of lanterns.

3. Some less common aspects of Easter in Dialogue Two were changed to more popular ones. For example, the names of Ukrainian food were found to be unfamiliar to some Canadians and were deleted. More common customs were included, such as egg hunting, egg decorating, and eating a big dinner.
4. Some of the questions and choices were rewritten in simpler syntax and lexicon.
5. The speed for the dialogue on the Spring Festival was increased to a more normal speed.
6. Some items in the background questionnaire were rewritten in easier vocabulary so that the meaning was clearer to the Chinese students.

Subject Population and Sample

After the testing instruments were ready for administration in the main study, 80 subjects were recruited to participate in the study: 40 Chinese students and 40 Canadian students.

The Chinese Subjects

The criteria for selecting Chinese subjects for this study were as follows.

1. The population from which the Chinese subjects would be recruited was to be composed of Chinese students from

mainland China studying in the University of Alberta.

2. They should be students who came for the 1988-89 academic year.
3. The length of stay in Canada of these students should be equivalent (Sept 1988 -- March 1989).
4. They should be students who had never been to other English speaking countries before they came to Canada and who had never experienced Easter in Canada or in any other country before they took the tests in this study.
5. They should be equivalent in their English proficiency level to the extent that all had at least received the score required of graduate students for the TOEFL test (a minimum of 550 on TOEFL is required of graduate students or 120 on the English Proficiency Test for visiting scholars).
6. They should be enrolled in similar areas of study and as much as possible at the same level.

The Chinese subjects were recruited by the researcher. The purpose of the study was first explained briefly in English to them and a more detailed account was given in Chinese. Most individuals were contacted at their residence. Others were contacted at the recreation center or at their offices. Forty Chinese students from mainland China volunteered for this study. Data pertaining to the demographic description of subjects participating in the study are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

1) Sex of Subjects

As Table 1 indicates, of the 40 Chinese subjects four (10%) were females and 36 (90%) were males. Because most Chinese graduate students studying in U of A are male students, it was impossible to obtain a balance

of males and females as a whole. To overcome this difficulty as much as possible, the number of males and females was balanced in the two groups of the Chinese subjects in the tests. As a result, each group consisted of 2 females and 18 males.

2) Age of Subjects

Table 1 presents the age of the Chinese subjects at the time the study was conducted. The average age of the subjects was about 29 years and 2 months. Subjects 26 years old made up the largest proportion (17 % of the subjects) followed by subjects 27 and 28 years of age, each group making up 15% of the Chinese subjects.

3) Subjects' Place of Birth

As indicated in Table 1, 19 out of 40 subjects, or 47.5 % of the subjects were born in the South of China and 21 subjects, or 52.5 % were born in the North of China. The largest groups of subjects were from Beijing, the capital of China and from Zhejiang Province.

4) Educational Background and Academic Status in Canada

As indicated in Table 2, the subjects were all non-English major students, most of whom were science and engineering students, the rest being in related fields. Nineteen subjects were in the Ph. D. program, 9 in the Master's program, 11 were visiting scholars and one was a post-doctoral fellow. Fourteen of them have a bachelor's degree; 23 of them have a Master's degree, and three have a Ph. D. degree (see Table 1).

Table 1
Demographic Description of the Chinese Subjects

Descriptive Variables	Number of Subjects	Percentage
Number of Subjects	40	100%
Male	36	90.0%
Female	4	10.0%
Age of Subjects		
20 - 29	26	65.0%
30 - 39	14	35.0%
Place of Birth		
North China	19	47.5%
South China	21	52.5%
Educational Background		
Bachelor's Degree	14	35.0%
Master's Degree	23	57.5%
Ph.D. Degree	3	7.5%
Subjects' Status in Canada		
in Ph. D. Program	19	47.5%
in Master's Program	10	25.0%
visiting scholar	11	27.5%
Time of Arrival in Canada		
88.6 - 88.9	27	67.5%
88.11 - 89. 3	13	32.5%
English Proficiency Tests Taken by Subjects		
TOEFL	28	70.0%
EPT	16	40.0%
MTELP	1	2.5%

Table 2

Field of Study of the Chinese Subjects

Fields of Study	No. of Subjects	Percentage
Science	27	67.5%
Engineering	10	25.0%
Economics	1	2.5%
Forestry	1	2.5%
Medicine	1	2.5%

5) Residence in English-speaking Countries before Coming to Canada

Of the 40 subjects, two had been to an English-speaking country before they came to Canada. They had stayed there for about one month, but not during the Easter season. Therefore, neither of them had been exposed to the real experience of Easter in an English-speaking country or any other countries before they took the listening comprehension tests for this study.

6) Time of Arrival in Canada

Twenty-seven of the Chinese subjects (67.5%) arrived in Canada between June, 1988 and September, 1988, while 13 subjects (32.5%) arrived in Canada between November, 1988 and March, 1989. These two arrival groups were equally assigned to the two groups of the Chinese subjects, that is, the informal version group and the semi-formal version group.

7) English Proficiency of the Subjects

As indicated in Table 1, 28 subjects had taken the TOEFL and 16 had taken the EPT (English Proficiency Test). One had taken the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency. All of the graduate students in this study had taken TOEFL (with a minimum score of 550). Some of the graduate students had taken both TOEFL and EPT, and most visiting scholars had taken EPT (with a minimum score of 120) only. This indicates that the subjects had approximately the same level of English proficiency at the time when the study took place.

The Canadian Subjects

For the purpose of across-culture comparison, a sample of 40 Canadian subjects studying in the University of Alberta was selected. The Canadian subjects were recruited in the library for science and engineering, at students' lounges, or at cafeterias on campus. All of these subjects are native born Canadians, and English is their first language. All participated on a voluntary basis. To ensure similarity with the Chinese subjects, a major part of the Canadian subjects were students from the Faculties of Science or Engineering (see Table 3), and the rest came from related fields. Most of them were in their third or fourth year of undergraduate study. However two were Ph. D. students and two were Master's students (see Table 3). The average age of the Canadian subjects was 25.9; most of them were in their twenties and only four in their early thirties (see Table 3). The purpose of controlling the age of the subjects was to ensure that they could relate to the two dialogues which were written in the tone of a student in his twenties. The forty Canadian students were divided into two groups, each consisting of twenty subjects, with seventeen male and three female students in each group. The number of males and females for each group was

identical because some research has already proven that females tend to be better listeners.

Table 3

Demographic Description of the Canadian Subjects

Descriptive Variables	Number of Subjects	Percentage
Number of Subjects	40	100%
Male	34	85.0%
Female	6	15.0%
Age of Subjects		
20 - 29	35	87.5%
30 - 34	5	12.5%
Academic Status		
Undergraduate	36	90.0%
Master's	2	5.0%
Ph.D.	2	5.0%
Fields of Study		
Agriculture and Forestry	2	5.0%
Arts	1	2.5%
Business	1	2.5%
Education	1	2.5%
Engineering	15	37.5%
Science	20	50.0%

Testing Procedures

The Chinese students were assigned to two groups:

1) Group 1 listened to the informal version of the Spring Festival and Easter dialogues.
2) Group 2 listened to the semi-formal version of the two dialogues.

Most of the subjects were tested individually and only a few were tested in small groups of two or three. For a variety of reasons it was impossible to administer the tests in groups, since at the time of the research, there were many demands on their time, such as final examinations. As a result, it was necessary to conduct the tests at their convenience. Another reason for individual testing was that subjects could concentrate better on the tests if they could sit close to the tape-recorder. The tests were conducted at whatever quiet place was suitable to the subjects, such as the researcher's office, subject's residence, subject's office, or a quiet lounge.

Each subject was informed about the purpose of the study. Care was taken not to mention the topics of the dialogues. Subjects were told to listen to two dialogues of different content, familiar vs. unfamiliar, after which instructions for the tests were given orally both in English and Chinese. Each subject was then given the listening material which consisted of tape-recorded dialogues and multiple-choice comprehension questions. To minimize the reading factor, the list of multiple-choice answers was not given to the subjects until they had finished listening to each dialogue. Together with the list of multiple-choice answers in printed form, they were given a blank sheet of paper for writing down the letters representing the answers instead of checking the answer on the question sheet itself to minimize the reading factor. They were then asked to fill out a debriefing questionnaire designed to elicit information about the degree of the

subjects' prior familiarity with the information in the texts, and their ratings of the difficulty of grammar, vocabulary and content and overall organization. Only some of the subjects had time to complete the background questionnaire immediately after the tests. Because of the length of the questionnaire (nine pages), some asked to complete them at their convenience some days after the tests and to return them to the researcher by campus mail.

Eight Chinese subjects were chosen for an individually administered, taped interview which took ten to fifteen minutes. The interview was undertaken immediately after the subject listened to the passages, completed the multiple-choice questions, and filled out the debriefing questionnaire. The subjects for the interview were chosen on a voluntary basis, five from Group 1 who had listened to the informal version and three from Group 2 who had listened to the semi-formal version. The interview, all conducted in English, was tape recorded and were later transcribed.

In summary, the order of the presentation of the instrument was as follows.

1. The listening tests (15 minutes)
2. Debriefing questionnaire (5 minutes)
3. Background questionnaire (20 minutes)
4. Interview (10 -15 minutes)

Forty Canadian students volunteered to take part in the research. Like the Chinese subjects, the Canadian subjects were also assigned to two groups: Group 1 listened to the informal version of each dialogue while Group 2 listened to the semi-formal version of each dialogue. The purpose of the study and instructions for the listening comprehension tests were explained in English to the Canadian subjects. The tests were administered in a place which was convenient for them, such as the science library, a lounge, or a quiet cafeteria. A headphone was used so that the subject could concentrate thoroughly on the tests and people around the subject would not

be disturbed by the tape. After the tests had been administered, the subjects were asked to complete a debriefing questionnaire which was the same as the one for the Chinese subjects. Since the background questionnaire for the Canadian subjects was brief (two pages), all the Canadian subjects were able to complete it right after the debriefing questionnaire. The order of the presentation was as follows.

1. Listening tests (15 minutes)
2. Debriefing Questionnaire (5 minutes)
3. Background questionnaire (5 minutes)

Scoring Procedures

The tests were hand scored by the researcher. Each of the 20 questions on both tests (Easter and the Spring Festival) received either a zero for a wrong answer or one for a correct answer. Based on this, a score of between zero and twenty was assigned to each test for each subject.

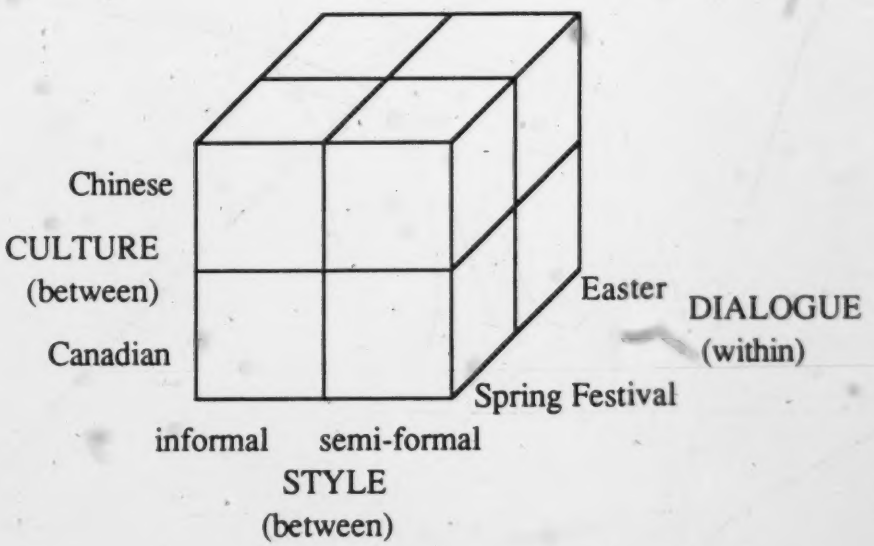
Statistical Analysis

Three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures and a priori test (Bonferroni) were planned to be used in statistical analysis of the data to see if there would be any significant interaction and significant differences among the cultural background of the subjects, style of speech, and the cultural origin of the dialogues with respect to the hypotheses. There were three independent variables, each with two levels: cultural origin of dialogues (Easter vs. the Spring Festival), style of speech (informal vs. semi-formal), and cultural background of subjects (Chinese vs. Canadian). The cultural background of subjects (Culture) and style of speech (Style) were the between-subjects factors and cultural origin of dialogues (Dialogue) was a within-subject factor (See Figure 1). The

dependent variables were comprehension as measured by the total scores and each of the individual question type scores (explicit questions and questions relating to slang and colloquialisms and implicit questions). One-way analysis of variance and Bonferroni test would also be performed to see if there would be significant interaction and significant difference between the order of the presentation of the dialogues and the cultural origin of the dialogues. The significance level for all the tests was set at .05. The results of statistical analysis of the data are presented in Chapter IV.

Figure 1

Research Design of Three-Way ANOVA with Repeated Measures



CULTURE x STYLE x DIALOGUE

2 (between) x 2 (between) x 2 (within)

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Chapter IV has four main sections. The first section presents the results as they relate to the five hypotheses. The second section presents an analysis of the questionnaires and interviews. The third section presents a discussion of the results of the study with conclusions and implications drawn from the study.

THE STATISTICAL RESULTS OF THE LISTENING TESTS

The Results of the Study with Respect to the Hypotheses

Four measures were used in the listening tests of both the semi-formal and informal versions:

a) Total test scores (sum of explicit and implicit questions, 20 in all)
b) Explicit questions (10 questions)
c) Questions to measure the effect of using slang and colloquialisms (5 questions included in the 10 explicit questions, but measured separately)
d) Implicit questions (10 questions)

A three-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) with repeated measures was performed on the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) on the advice of a specialist in statistics and with the help of two graduate students in the Statistical Service Unit of University of Alberta. These multivariate analyses were preferred to *t* - tests in order to control Type I error. Errors were split in within-group and between-group components in order to correctly carry out analysis of variance with repeated measures.

Separate three-way analysis of variance with repeated measures was performed on the total test scores (sum of explicit questions and implicit questions) and on each of the individual question type scores (explicit questions, implicit questions, and questions related to slang and colloquialisms). Scores on questions to measure slang and colloquialisms were separated out from the explicit questions and analyzed independently. The analyses were performed to determine if there were any main effects or interactions for the cultural origin of the dialogues (Dialogue), style of speech (Style), and the cultural background of the subjects (Culture). The results are presented in Table 4. This table shows that there was no significant Culture x Style x Dialogue interaction when measured by total scores, explicit questions and implicit questions. There were no significant interactions between style of speech and the cultural origin of the dialogues (Style x Dialogue) as measured by all of the four dependent variables. Nor was there a significant interaction between style of speech and the cultural background of the subjects (Style x Culture) as measured by total scores. All the interactions which are significant are analyzed in the following paragraphs illustrated with Figures 2 - 12.

Table 4

Three-way ANOVA with Respect to the Listening Comprehension Tests

	Style	Culture	Dialogue	Style X Culture	Style X Dialogue	Culture X Dialogue	Style X Culture X Dialogue
Total Scores	n.s.	F = 27.83**	F = 59.15**	n.s.	n.s.	F = 165.62**	n.s.
Explicit Questions	n.s.	F = 48.96**	F = 67.03**	F = 5.30*	n.s.	F = 25.52**	n.s.
Questions Relating to Slang	F = 4.64*	F = 43.66**	F = 40.84**	F = 20.52**	n.s.	F = 5.36*	F = 4.54*
Implicit Questions	F = 4.49*	n.s.	F = 11.72**	F = 5.30*	n.s.	F = 210.90**	n.s.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

n.s. not significant

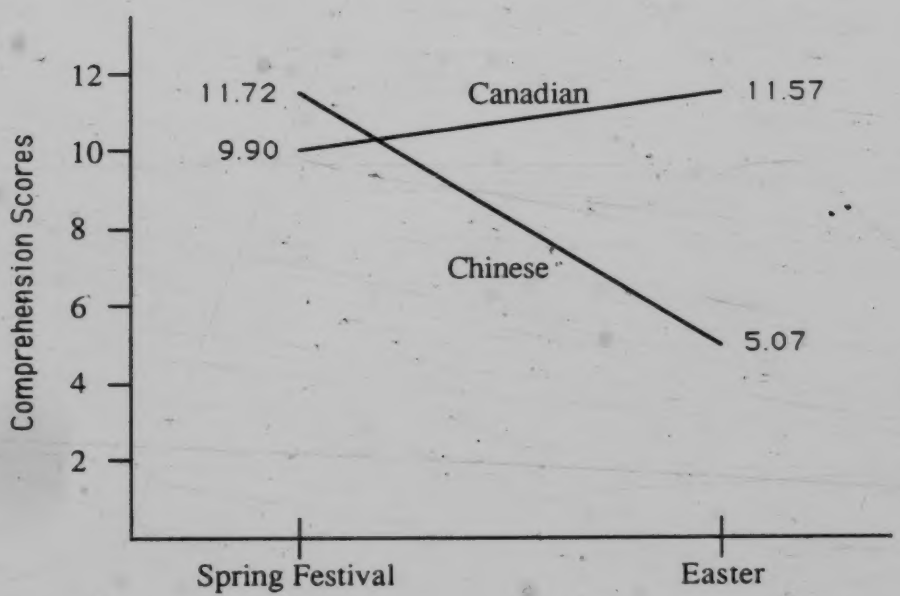
When measured by total scores, there was a significant interaction between the Cultural Background of the Subjects and the Cultural Origin of the Dialogues (Culture x Dialogue) with the informal and semi-formal versions combined [F (1, 76) = 165.62, $p < .001$. See Table 4]. This indicates that:

a) When the content of the dialogue changed from the Spring Festival to Easter, listening comprehension scores decreased dramatically for the Chinese subjects but increased somewhat for the Canadian subjects (see Figure 2).

b) The difference between the Chinese and the Canadian subjects was considerably greater with the Easter dialogue than with the Spring Festival dialogue (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Culture x Dialogue Interaction as Measured by Total Scores



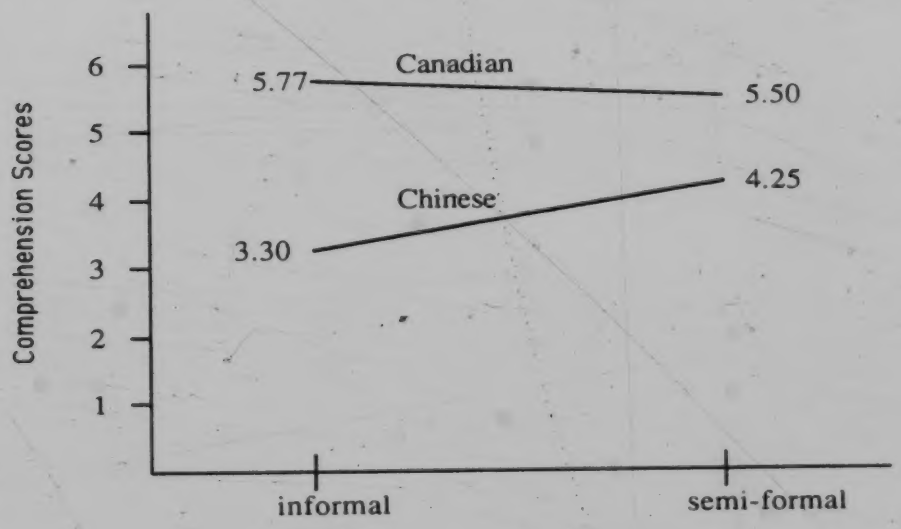
When measured by explicit questions, there was a significant interaction between Cultural Background of Subjects and Style of Speech (Culture x Style) with the Easter and Spring Festival dialogues combined [$F(1, 76) = 5.30, p < .05$. See Table 4]. This indicates that:

a) Listening comprehension scores were higher for semi-formal style than for informal style for the Chinese subjects, but the Canadian subjects performed slightly better on informal style than on semi-formal style (see Figure 3).

b) The difference between the Chinese subjects and the Canadian subjects was greater with informal style than with semi-formal style (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Culture x Style Interaction as Measured by Explicit Questions



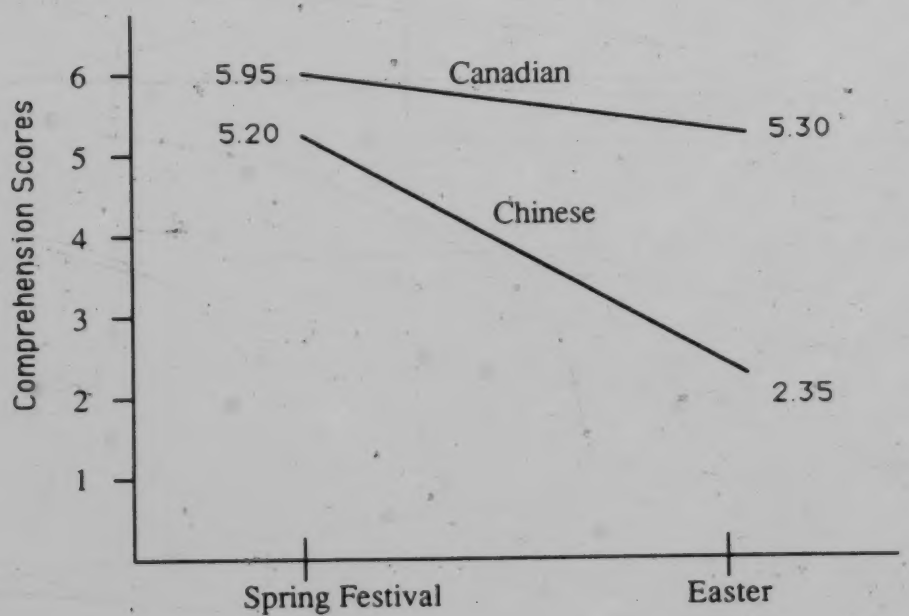
When measured by explicit questions, there was a significant interaction between the Cultural Background of the Subjects and the Cultural Origin of the Dialogues (Culture x Dialogue) with the informal and semi-formal versions combined [F (1, 76) = 25.52, $p < .001$. See Table 4]. This indicates that:

a) When the content of the dialogue changed from the Spring Festival to Easter, listening comprehension scores decreased dramatically for the Chinese subjects but moderately for the Canadian subjects (see Figure 4).

b) The difference between the Chinese and the Canadian subjects was greater with the Easter dialogue than with the Spring Festival dialogue (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Culture x Dialogue Interaction as Measured by Explicit Questions



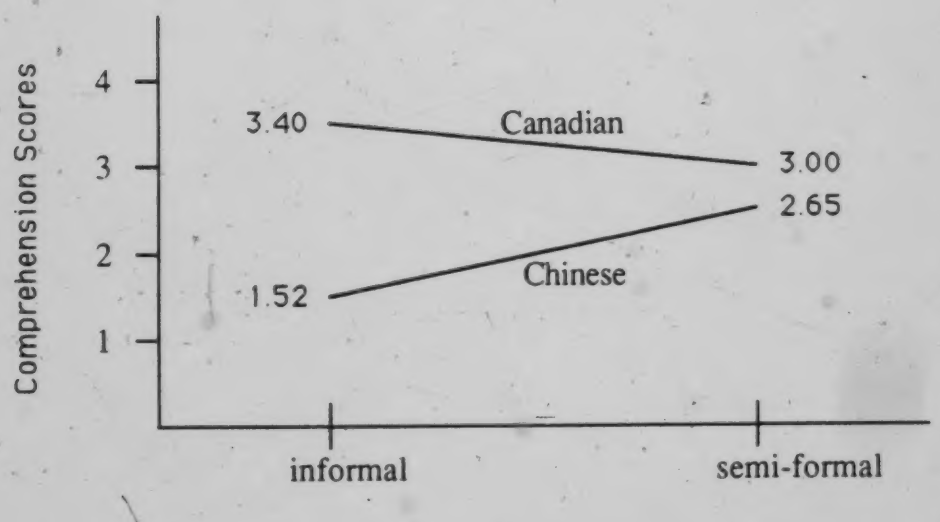
When measured by questions related to slang and colloquialisms, there was a significant interaction between the Cultural Background of the Subjects and Style of Speech with the Easter and Spring Festival dialogues combined [F (1, 76) = 20.52, $p < .001$. See Table 4]. This indicates:

a) For the Chinese subjects, listening comprehension scores were higher for the semi-formal version than for the informal version. For the Canadian subjects, the scores were lower for the semi-formal version than for the informal version (see Figure 5).

b) The difference between the Chinese and Canadian subjects was greater with the informal version than with the semi-formal version (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Culture x Style Interaction as Measured by Questions Related to Slang and Colloquialisms



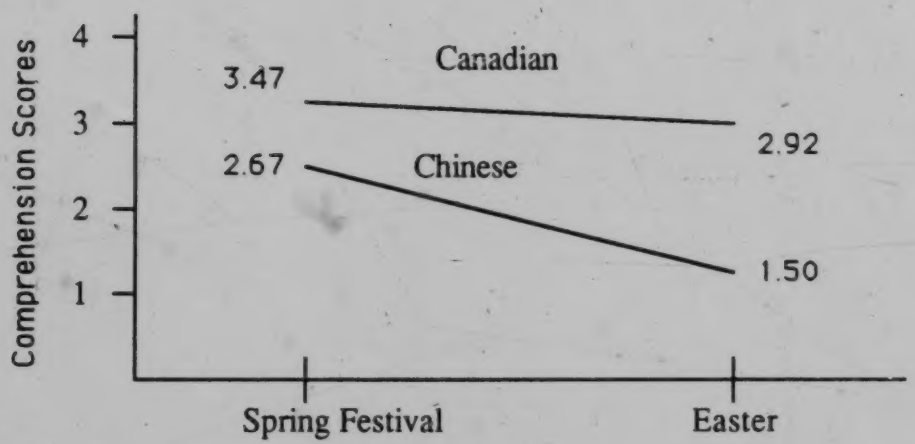
When measured by questions related to slang and colloquialisms, there was a significant interaction between the Cultural Background of the Subjects and the Cultural Origin of the Dialogues (Culture x Dialogue) with the informal and semi-formal versions combined [F (1, 76) = 5.36, $p < .05$. See Table 4]. This shows that:

a) When the content of the dialogue changed from the Spring Festival to Easter, listening comprehension scores decreased to a greater degree for the Chinese subjects than for the Canadian subjects (see Figure 6).

b) The difference between the Chinese and the Canadian subjects was greater with the Easter dialogue than with the Spring Festival dialogue (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Culture x Dialogue Interaction as Measured by Questions Related to Slang and Colloquialisms

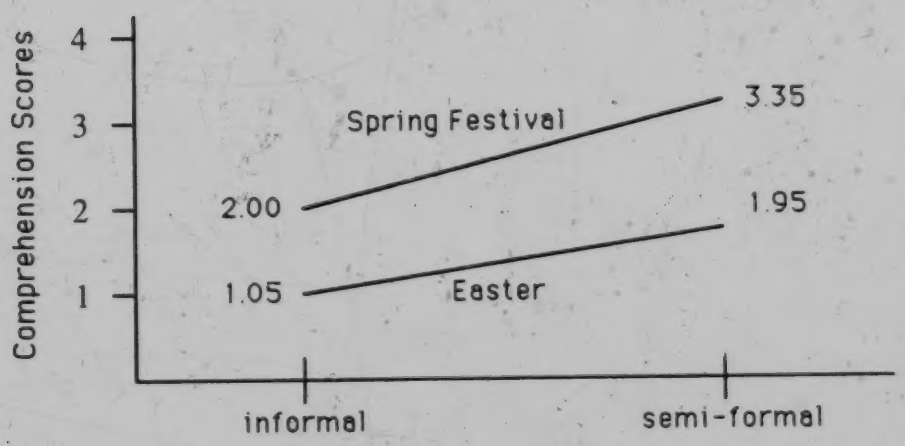


When measured by questions related to slang and colloquialisms, there was a significant interaction among the three factors: Culture x Dialogue x Style [F (1, 76) = 4.54, $p < .05$. See Table 4]. This shows that:

a) Listening comprehension scores were higher for the semi-formal version than for the informal version for the Chinese subjects with both the Spring Festival dialogue and the Easter dialogue. For the Chinese subjects, the difference between the Easter dialogue and the Spring Festival dialogue in semi-formal style was slightly greater than the difference between these two dialogues in informal style (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

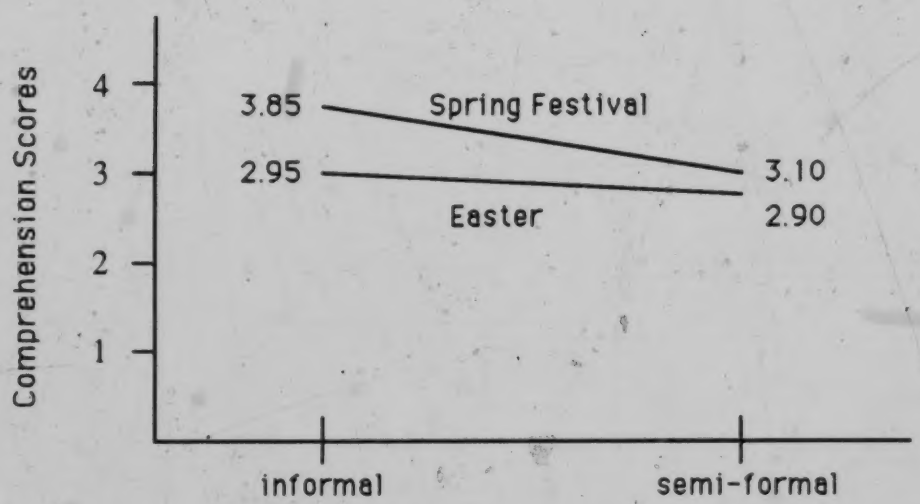
Style x Dialogue Interaction as Measured by Questions Related to Slang and Colloquialisms for the Chinese Subjects



b) For the Canadian subjects, listening comprehension scores were higher for the informal version than the semi-formal version with both the Spring Festival and the Easter dialogues. For the Canadian subjects, the difference between the Easter dialogue and the Spring Festival dialogue was greater for the informal version than for the semi-formal version (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

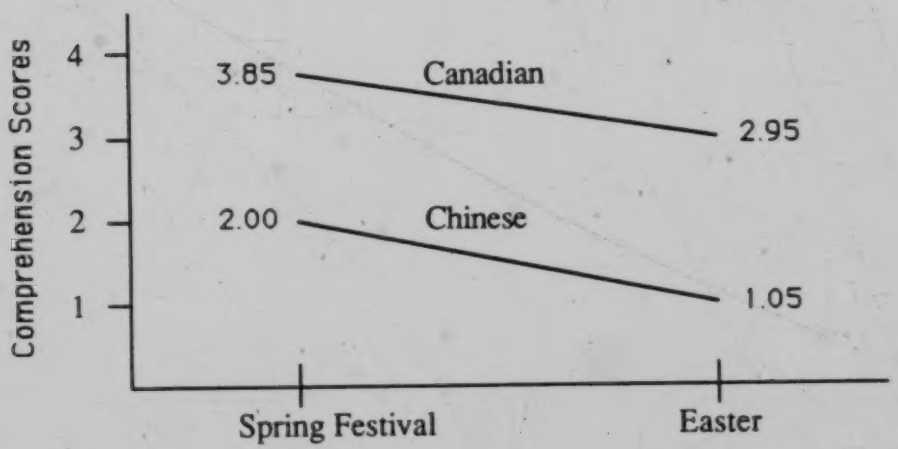
Style x Dialogue Interaction as Measured by Questions Related to Slang and Colloquialisms for the Canadian Subjects



c) For the informal version, listening comprehension scores decreased from the Spring Festival dialogue to the Easter dialogue for both the Chinese and the Canadian subjects. The difference between the Chinese and the Canadian subjects with the Spring Festival dialogue was similar to the difference between the two groups of subjects with the Easter dialogue (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

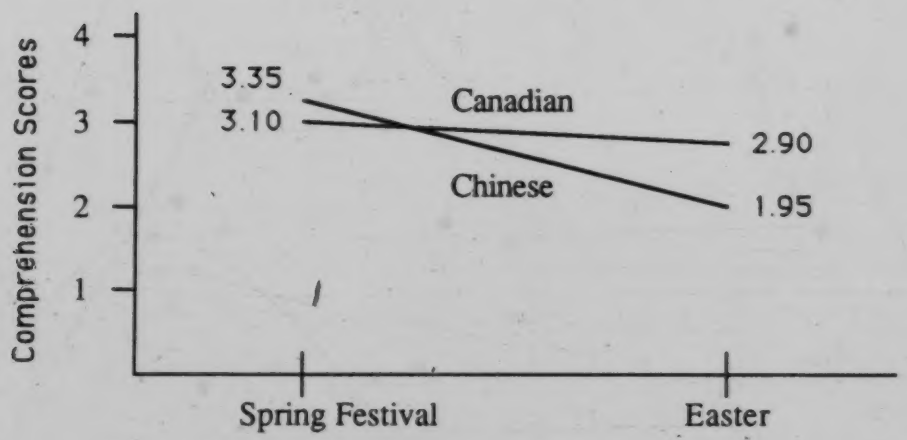
Culture x Dialogue Interaction for Informal Version
as Measured by Questions Related to Slang and Colloquialisms



d) For the semi-formal version, listening comprehension scores decreased dramatically from the Spring Festival dialogue to Easter dialogue for the Chinese subjects but decreased moderately for the Canadian subjects. The Chinese subjects performed better than the Canadian subjects on the Spring Festival dialogue but more poorly on the Easter dialogue. The difference between the Chinese and the Canadian subjects was greater with the Easter dialogue than with the Spring Festival dialogue (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Culture x Dialogue Interaction for Semi-formal Version
as Measured by Questions Related to Slang and Colloquialisms



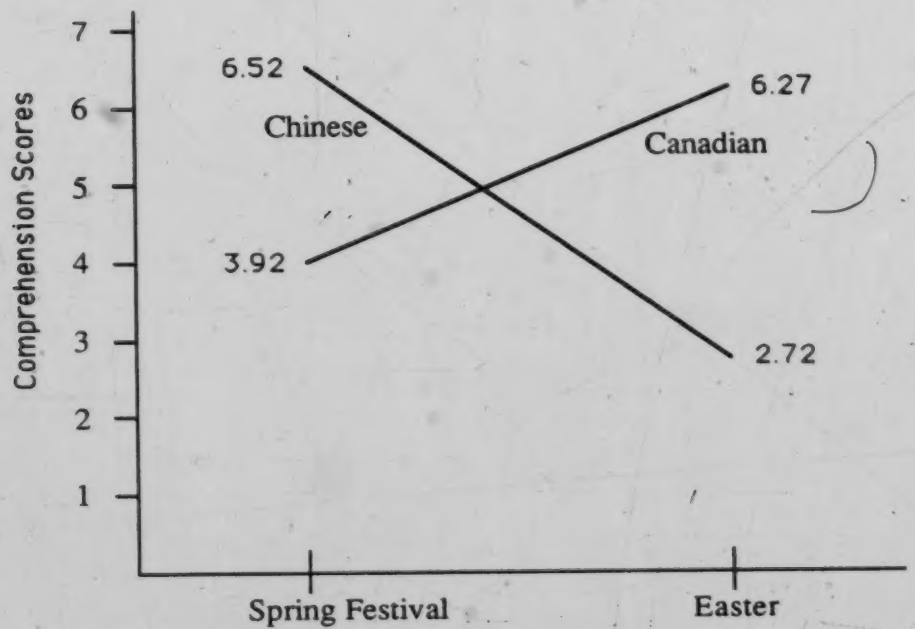
When measured by implicit questions, there was a significant interaction between the Cultural Background of the Subjects and the Cultural Origin of the Dialogues (Culture x Dialogue) with the informal and semi-formal versions combined [F (1, 76) = 210.90, $p < .001$. See Table 4]. This shows that:

a) When the content of the dialogue changed from the Spring Festival to Easter, listening comprehension scores decreased dramatically for the Chinese subjects but increased dramatically for the Canadian subjects (see Figure 11).

b) The difference between the Chinese and the Canadian subjects was greater with the Easter dialogue than with the Spring Festival dialogue (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Culture x Dialogue Interaction as Measured by Implicit Questions



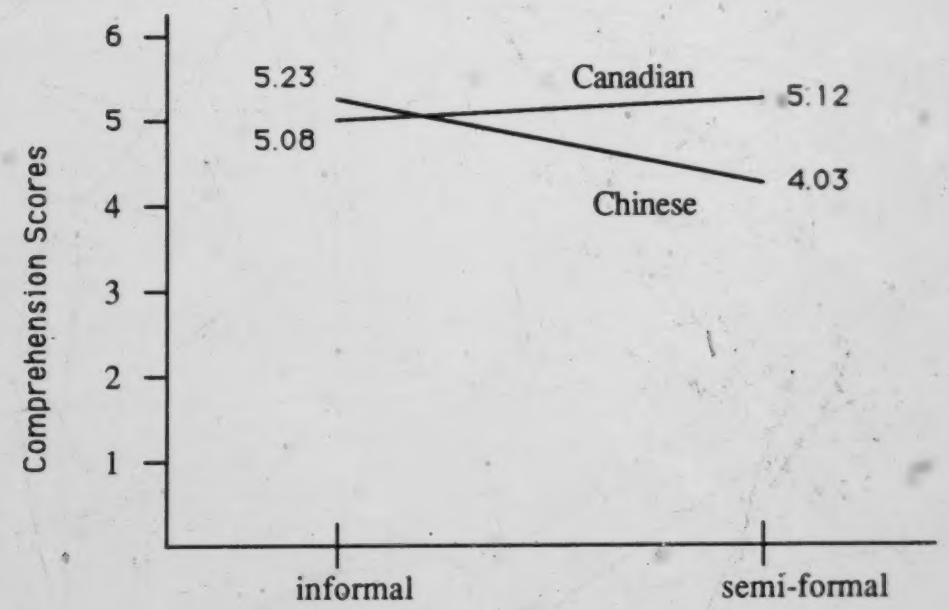
When measured by implicit questions, there was a significant interaction between the Cultural Background of the Subjects and Style of Speech (Culture x Style) with the Spring Festival and Easter dialogues combined [F (1, 76) = 5.30, $p < .05$. See Table 4]. This shows that:

a) For the Chinese subjects, listening comprehension scores were higher for the informal version than for the semi-formal one when measured by implicit questions. For the Canadian subjects, scores were higher for the semi-formal version than for the informal one (see Figure 12).

b) The difference between the Chinese and the Canadian subjects was greater with the semi-formal version than with the informal version (see Figure 12).

Figure 12

Style x Culture Interaction as Measured by Implicit Questions



Bonferroni Tests (a priori tests) were also performed for total test scores and each of the individual question type scores in terms of comparisons of scores between different cultural groups of subjects, different styles, and different cultural origins of the texts to see if there were significant differences (see Tables 8 - 31). A total of 12 comparisons per dependent variable were performed with an experiment wise error of .05 and a hypothesis error rate of .05/12 or .0041667. There were four dependent variables: total scores, explicit questions, questions relating to slang and colloquialisms and implicit questions. Bonferroni tests were chosen because we were testing hypotheses constructed before the experiment.

Hypothesis One: *The Chinese subjects will comprehend the dialogue based on the Chinese culture significantly better than the one based on the Canadian culture.*

The results of the study provide support for this hypothesis. When measured by total scores (sum of explicit and implicit questions), the Bonferroni tests revealed that the Chinese subjects understood the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 11.45) significantly better than the Easter dialogue (mean = 5.60) in informal style. There was also a significant difference in the Chinese subjects' comprehension of the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 12.00) and of the Easter dialogue (mean = 4.55) in semi-formal style (refer to Table 5).

Table 5

A Comparison of the Chinese Subjects' Comprehension of the Spring Festival and Easter Dialogues as Measured by Total Scores

	informal version	semi-formal version
Spring Fest. (Mean Scores)	11.45	12.00
Easter (Mean Scores)	5.60	4.55
S. E.	0.65	0.65
D. F.	1, 76	1, 76
Sign. Diff.	5.85*	7.45*

S. E. = Standard Error of Difference Between Means

D. F. = Degree of Freedom;

* indicates significant difference

When the effect of cultural origin on the individual question type scores of the Chinese subjects was considered, the following results were revealed:

a) When measured by explicit questions, the Chinese subjects achieved a significantly better comprehension of the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 4.45) than of the Easter dialogue (mean = 2.15) in informal style. There was also a significant difference in the Chinese subjects' comprehension of the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 5.95) and of the Easter dialogue (mean = 2.55) in semi-formal style (refer to Table 6).

Table 6

A Comparison of the Chinese Subjects' Comprehension of the Spring Festival and Easter Dialogues as Measured by Explicit Questions

	informal version	semi-formal version
Spring Fest. (Mean Scores)	4.45	5.95
Easter (Mean Scores)	2.15	2.55
S. E.	0.43	0.43
D. F.	1, 76	1, 76
Sign. Diff.	2.30*	3.40*

b) When measured by the questions relating to slang and colloquialisms, the Chinese subjects performed significantly better on the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 2.00) than on the Easter dialogue (mean = 1.05) in informal style. The Chinese subjects also understood the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 3.35) significantly better than the Easter dialogue (mean = 1.95) in semi-formal style (refer to Table 7).

Table 7

A Comparison of the Chinese Subjects' Comprehension of the Spring Festival and Easter Dialogues as Measured by Questions Relating to Slang and Colloquialisms

	informal version	semi-formal version
Spring Fest. (Mean Scores)	2.00	3.35
Easter (Mean Scores)	1.05	1.95
S. E.	0.27	0.27
D. F.	1, 76	1, 76
Sign. Diff.	0.95*	1.40*

c) When measured by implicit questions, the Chinese subjects understood the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 7.00) significantly better than the Easter dialogue (mean = 3.45) in informal style. They also comprehended the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 6.05) significantly better than the Easter dialogue (mean = 2.00) in semi-formal style (refer to Table 8).

Table 8

A Comparison of the Chinese Subjects' Comprehension of the Spring Festival and Easter Dialogues as Measured by Implicit Questions

	informal version	semi-formal version
Spring Fest. (Mean Scores)	7.00	6.05
Easter (Mean Scores)	3.45	2.00
S. E.	0.42	0.42
D. F.	1, 76	1, 76
Sign. Diff.	3.55*	4.05*

Hypothesis Two: *The Chinese subjects will perform significantly better on the semi-formal style than on the informal style*

When measured by the total scores, the Bonferroni Test showed no significant differences in the Chinese subjects' performance between the informal version of the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 11.45) and the semi-formal version of this dialogue (mean = 12.00). There was no significant difference in the Chinese subjects' performance on the informal version of the Easter dialogue (mean = 5.65) and on the semi-formal version of this dialogue (mean = 4.55), either (refer to Table 9).

Table 9

A Comparison of the Chinese Subjects' Comprehension of the Informal and Semi-formal Versions as Measured by Total Scores

	Spring Festival dialogue	Easter Dialogue
informal (Mean Scores)	11.45	5.60
semi-formal (Mean Scores)	12.00	4.55
S. E.	0.78	0.78
D. F.	1, 139.08	1, 139.08
Sign. Diff.	n.s.	n.s.

n.s. = not significant

a) When measured by the explicit questions, the Chinese subjects understood the semi-formal version of the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 5.95) significantly better than the informal version of this dialogue (mean = 4.45). But there was no significant difference in the Chinese subjects' comprehension of the informal version of the Easter dialogue (mean = 2.15) and of the semi-formal version of this dialogue (mean = 2.55) (refer to Table 10).

Table 10

A Comparison of the Chinese Subjects' Comprehension of the Informal and Semi-formal Versions as Measured by Explicit Questions

	Spring Festival dialogue	Easter Dialogue
informal (Mean Scores)	4.45	2.15
semi-formal (Mean Scores)	5.95	2.55
S. E.	0.48	0.48
D. F.	1, 145.63	1, 145.63
Sign. Diff.	1.50*	n.s.

b) When measured by the questions relating to slang and colloquialisms, the Chinese subjects understood the semi-formal version of the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 3.35) significantly better than the informal version of this dialogue (mean = 2.00). They also comprehended the semi-formal version of the Easter dialogue (mean = 1.95) significantly better than the the informal version of this dialogue (mean = 1.05) (refer to Table 11).

Table 11

A Comparison of the Chinese Subjects' Comprehension of the Informal and Semi-formal Versions as Measured by Questions Relating to Slang and Colloquialisms

	Spring Festival dialogue	Easter Dialogue
informal (Mean Scores)	2.00	1.05
semi-formal (Mean Scores)	3.35	1.95
S. E.	0.31	0.31
D. F.	1, 145.13	1, 145.13
Sign. Diff.	1.35*	0.90*

c) When measured by the implicit questions, there was no significant difference between the Chinese subjects' understanding of the informal version of the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 7.00) and of the semi-formal version of this dialogue (mean = 6.05). But the Chinese subjects comprehended the informal version of the Easter dialogue (mean = 3.45) significantly better than the semi-formal version of this dialogue (mean = 2.00) (refer to Table 12).

Table 12

A Comparison of the Chinese Subjects' Comprehension of the Informal and Semi-formal Versions as Measured by Implicit Questions

	Spring Festival dialogue	Easter Dialogue
informal (Mean Scores)	7.00	3.45
semi-formal (Mean Scores)	6.05	2.00
S. E.	0.49	0.49
D. F.	1, 143.48	1, 143.48
Sign. Diff.	n.s.	1.45*

Hypothesis Three: *The Canadian subjects will comprehend the dialogue based on the Canadian culture significantly better than the one based on the Chinese culture.*

When measured by total scores, the Canadian subjects understood the Easter dialogue (mean = 11.85) significantly better than the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 9.85) in informal style. There was no significant difference between their understanding of the Easter dialogue (mean = 11.30) and the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 9.95) in semi-formal style (refer to Table 13).

Table 13

A Comparison of the Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Easter and Spring Festival Dialogues as Measured by Total Scores

	informal version	semi-formal version
Spring Fest. (Mean Scores)	9.85	9.95
Easter (Mean Scores)	11.85	11.30
S. E.	0.65	0.65
D. F.	1, 76	1, 76
Sign. Diff.	2.00*	n.s.

When the effect of the cultural origin of the dialogues on individual scores was considered, the following results were revealed:

a) When measured by explicit questions, there was no significant difference in the Canadian subjects' comprehension of the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 6.00) and the Easter dialogue (mean= 5.55) in informal style. There was no significant difference in the Canadian subjects' performance on the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 5.95) and on the Easter dialogue (mean = 5.05) in semi-formal style, either (refer to Table 14).

Table 14

A Comparison of the Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Easter and Spring Festival Dialogues as Measured by Explicit Questions

	informal version	semi-formal version
Spring Fest. (Mean Scores)	6.00	5.95
Easter (Mean Scores)	5.55	5.05
S. E.	0.43	0.43
D. F.	1, 76	1, 76
Sign. Diff.	n.s.	n.s.

b) When measured by tests showing comprehension of slang and colloquialisms, the Canadian subjects comprehended the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 3.85) significantly better than the Easter dialogue (mean = 2.95) in informal style. The difference in their comprehension of the two dialogues in semi-formal style was not significant [mean (Easter) = 2.90; mean (Spring) = 3.10. Refer to Table 15].

Table 15

A Comparison of the Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Easter and Spring Festival Dialogues as Measured by Questions Relating to Slang and Colloquialisms

	informal version	semi-formal version
Spring Fest. (Mean Scores)	3.85	3.10
Easter (Mean Scores)	2.95	2.90
S. E.	0.27	0.27
D. F.	1, 76	1, 76
Sign. Diff.	0.90*	n.s.

c) When measured by implicit questions, the Canadian subjects understood the Easter dialogue (mean = 6.30) significantly better than the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 3.85) in informal style. They also comprehended the Easter dialogue (mean = 6.25) significantly better than the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 4.00) in semi-formal style (refer to Table 16).

Table 16

A Comparison of the Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Easter and Spring Festival Dialogues as Measured by Implicit Questions

	informal version	semi-formal version
Spring Fest. (Mean Scores)	3.85	4.00
Easter (Mean Scores)	6.30	6.25
S. E.	0.42	0.42
D. F.	1, 76	1, 76
Sign. Diff.	2.45*	2.25*

Hypothesis Four: *The Canadian subjects will perform equally well both on the semi-formal style and on the informal style.*

When measured by the total scores, results showed that there was no significant difference in the Canadian subjects' comprehension of the informal version of the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 9.85) and of the semi-formal version of this dialogue (mean = 9.95). The difference in their comprehension of the two versions of the Easter dialogue was not significant either [mean (informal) = 11.85; mean (semi-formal) = 11.30. Refer to Table 17].

Table 17

A Comparison of the Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Informal and Semi-formal Versions as Measured by Total Scores

	Spring Festival dialogue	Easter dialogue
informal (Mean Scores)	9.85	11.85
semi-formal (Mean Scores)	9.95	11.30
S. E.	0.78	0.78
D. F.	1, 139.08	1, 139.08
Sign. Diff.	n.s	n.s

When the individual scores were considered, the results were as follows:

a) When measured by the explicit questions, there was no significant difference between the Canadian subjects' comprehension of the informal version of the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 6.00) and of the semi-formal version of this dialogue (mean = 5.95). The difference between their comprehension of the two versions of the Easter dialogue was not significant either [mean (informal) = 5.55; mean (semi-formal) = 5.05. Refer to table 18].

Table 18

A Comparison of the Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Informal and Semi-formal Versions as Measured by Explicit Questions

	Spring Festival Dialogue	Easter dialogue
informal (Mean Scores)	6.00	5.55
semi-formal (Mean Scores)	5.95	5.05
S. E.	0.48	0.48
D. F.	1, 145.63	1, 145.63
Sign. Diff.	n.s	n.s

b) When measured by the test of comprehension of slang and colloquialisms, the results showed no significant difference between the Canadian subjects' comprehension of the informal version of the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 3.85) and of the semi-formal version of this dialogue (mean = 3.10). Their comprehension of the two versions of the Easter dialogue was not significant either [mean (informal) = 2.95; mean (semi-formal) = 2.90. Refer to Table 19].

Table 19

A Comparison of the Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Informal and Semi-formal Versions as Measured by Questions Relating to Slang and Colloquialisms

	Spring Festival dialogue	Easter dialogue
informal (Mean Scores)	3.85	2.95
semi-formal (Mean Scores)	3.10	2.90
S. E.	0.31	0.31
D. F.	1, 145.13	1, 145.13
Sign. Diff.	n.s	n.s

c) When measured by implicit questions, there was no significant difference in the Canadian subjects' comprehension of the informal version of the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 3.85) and of the semi-formal version of this dialogue (mean = 4.00). The difference between their comprehension of the two versions of the Easter dialogue was not significant either [mean (informal) = 6.30; mean (semi-formal) = 6.25. Refer to Table 20].

Table 20

A Comparison of the Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Informal and Semi-formal Versions as Measured by Implicit Questions

	Spring Festival dialogue	Easter dialogue
informal (Mean Scores)	3.85	6.30
semi-formal (Mean Scores)	4.00	6.25
S. E.	0.49	0.49
D. F.	1, 143.48	1, 143.48
Sign. Diff.	n.s	n.s

Hypothesis Five: *The Chinese subjects will comprehend the dialogue based on the Chinese culture significantly better than the Canadian subjects.*

When measured by the total scores, there was no significant difference between the Chinese and the Canadian subjects' understanding of the Spring Festival dialogue in informal style [mean (Chinese) = 11.45; mean (Canadian) = 9.85]. The difference in the performance of these two groups of subjects on the Spring Festival dialogue in semi-formal style was not significant either [mean (Chinese) = 12.00; mean (Canadian) = 9.95. Refer to table 21].

Table 21

A Comparison of the Chinese and Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Spring Festival Dialogue as Measured by Total Scores

	informal version	semi-formal version
Chinese (Mean Scores)	11.45	12.00
Canadian (Mean Scores)	9.85	9.95
S. E.	0.78	0.78
D. F.	1, 139.08	1, 139.08
Sign. Diff.	n.s.	n.s.

When individual question type scores were considered, the results were as follows.

a) When measured by explicit questions, the Canadian subjects (mean = 6.00) understood the Spring Festival dialogue in informal style significantly better than the Chinese subjects (mean = 4.45). The Chinese subjects (mean = 5.95) achieved the same score as the Canadian subjects (mean = 5.95) in their performance on the Spring Festival dialogue in semi-formal style (refer to Table 22).

Table 22

A Comparison of the Chinese and Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Spring Festival Dialogue as Measured by Explicit Questions

	informal version	semi-formal version
Chinese (Mean Scores)	4.45	5.95
Canadian (Mean Scores)	6.00	5.95
S. E.	0.48	0.48
D. F.	1, 145.63	1, 145.63
Sign. Diff.	1.55*	n.s.

b) When measured by the questions relating to slang and colloquialisms, the Canadian subjects (mean = 3.85) comprehended the Spring Festival dialogue in informal style significantly better than the Chinese subjects (mean = 2.00). The difference between these two groups of subjects in their comprehension of the Spring Festival dialogue in semi-formal style was not significant [mean (Chinese) = 3.35; mean (Canadian) = 3.10. Refer to Table 23].

Table 23

A Comparison of the Chinese and Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Spring Festival Dialogue as Measured by Questions Relating to Slang and Colloquialisms

	informal version	semi-formal version
Chinese (Mean Scores)	2.00	3.35
Canadian (Mean Scores)	3.85	3.10
S. E.	0.31	0.31
D. F.	1, 145.13	1, 145.13
Sign. Diff.	1.85*	n.s.

c) When measured by the implicit questions, the Chinese subjects (mean = 7.00) comprehended the Spring Festival dialogue in informal style significantly better than the Canadian subjects (mean = 3.85). The Chinese subjects (mean = 6.05) also understood the Spring Festival dialogue in semi-formal style significantly better than the Canadian subjects (mean = 4.00) (refer to Table 24).

Table 24

A Comparison of the Chinese and Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Spring Festival Dialogue as Measured by Implicit Questions

	informal version	semi-formal version
Chinese (Mean Scores)	7.00	6.05
Canadian (Mean Scores)	3.85	4.00
S. E.	0.49	0.49
D. F.	1, 143.48	1, 143.48
Sign. Diff.	3.15*	2.05*

Hypothesis Six: *The Canadian subjects will comprehend the dialogue based on the Canadian culture dialogue significantly better than the Chinese subjects*

When measured by the total scores, the Canadian subjects (mean = 11.85) comprehended the Easter dialogue in informal style significantly better than the Chinese subjects (mean = 5.60). The Canadian subjects (mean = 11.30) also understood the Easter dialogue in semi-formal style significantly better than the Chinese subjects (mean = 4.55) (refer to Table 25).

Table 25

A Comparison of the Chinese and Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Easter Dialogue as Measured by Total Scores

	informal version	semi-formal version
Canadian (Mean Scores)	11.85	11.30
Chinese (Mean Scores)	5.60	4.55
S. E.	0.78	0.78
D. F.	1, 139.08	1, 139.08
Sign. Diff.	6.25*	6.75*

a) When measured by the explicit questions, the Canadian subjects (mean = 5.55) understood the Easter dialogue in informal style significantly better than the Chinese subjects (mean = 2.15). The Canadian subjects (mean = 5.05) also understood the Easter dialogue in semi-formal style significantly better than the Chinese subjects (mean = 2.55) (refer to Table 26).

Table 26

A Comparison of the Chinese and Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Easter Dialogue as Measured by Explicit Questions

	informal version	semi-formal version
Canadian (Mean Scores)	5.55	5.05
Chinese (Mean Scores)	2.15	2.55
S.E.	0.48	0.48
Sign. Diff.	3.40*	2.50*

b) When measured by questions relating to slang and colloquialisms, the Canadian subjects (mean = 2.95) understood the Easter dialogue in informal style significantly better than the Chinese subjects (mean = 1.05). The Canadian subjects (mean = 2.90) also comprehended the Easter dialogue in semi-formal style significantly better than the Chinese subjects (mean = 1.95) (refer to Table 27).

Table 27

A Comparison of the Chinese and Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Easter Dialogue as Measured by Questions Relating to Slang and Colloquialisms

	informal version	semi-formal version
Canadian (Mean Scores)	2.95	2.90
Chinese (Mean Scores)	1.05	1.95
S. E.	0.31	0.31
D. F.	1, 145.13	1, 145.13
Sign. Diff.	1.90*	0.95*

c) When measured by the implicit questions, the Canadian subjects (mean = 6.30) understood the Easter dialogue in informal style significantly better than the Chinese subjects (mean = 3.45). The Canadian subjects (mean = 6.25) also comprehended the Easter dialogue in semi-formal style significantly better than the Chinese subjects (mean = 2.00) (refer to Table 28).

Table 28

A Comparison of the Chinese and Canadian Subjects' Comprehension of the Easter Dialogue as Measured by Implicit Questions

	informal version	semi-formal version
Canadian (Mean Scores)	6.30	6.25
Chinese (Mean Scores)	3.45	2.00
S. E.	0.49	0.49
D. F.	1, 143.48	1, 143.48
Sign. Diff.	2.85*	4.25*

Summary of Results of the Listening Comprehension Tests

The Results of the Chinese Subjects' Performance

The statistical results presented earlier in this chapter show that the cultural origin of texts has a significant effect on the ESL students' listening comprehension. When the cultural content is familiar to them, they understand the text significantly better. All eight comparisons showed significant results (see Table 29) which supports Hypothesis One, namely, that cultural schemata play an important role in the Chinese subjects' listening comprehension, and that familiar cultural background assists them to a great extent in their understanding of the text.

Table 29

A Summary of the Chinese Subjects' Performance on the Spring Festival and Easter Dialogues

		Total	Explicit	Slang	Implicit
semi-formal version	Mean (Easter)	4.55	2.55	1.95	2.00
	Mean (Spring)	12.00	5.95	3.35	6.05
	Sig. Diff.	7.45*	3.40*	1.40*	4.05*
informal version	Mean (Easter)	5.60	2.15	1.05	3.45
	Mean (Spring)	11.45	4.45	2.00	7.00
	Sign. Diff.	5.85*	2.30*	0.95*	3.55*

As for the effect of style on the Chinese subjects' performance, three out of the eight comparisons showed significant results which supports Hypothesis Two, that is, the Chinese subjects will perform significantly better on the semi-formal version than on the informal version of each dialogue. The difference between the two versions was significant as measured by questions relating to slang and colloquialisms in both the Easter and the Spring Festival dialogues (Refer to Table 30). This indicates that informal style does exert an influence on the Chinese subjects mainly because of the use of slang and colloquialisms.

It is interesting to note that, contrary to expectations, the Chinese subjects in the informal version group performed significantly better than those in the semi-formal version group in terms of the implicit questions on the Easter dialogue (see Table 30). This was because many Chinese subjects in the semi-formal version group did not achieve as well in the questions asking them to identify the style of the dialogues and the relationship between the two speakers in the semi-formal version. Many of the subjects in the semi-formal version group were not successful in identifying the semi-formal style. Their unfamiliarity with the terms "informal" and "semi-formal" may have affected their ability to identify the level of formality correctly.

Table 30

A Summary of the Chinese Subjects' Performance on the Informal and Semi-formal Versions

		Total	Explicit	Slang	Implicit
Spring Fest. dialogue	Mean (informal)	11.45	4.45	2.00	7.00
	Mean (semi-formal)	12.00	5.95	3.35	6.05
	Sig. Diff.	n.s.	1.50*	1.35*	n.s.
Easter dialogue	Mean (informal)	5.60	2.15	1.05	3.45
	Mean (semi-formal)	4.55	2.55	1.95	2.00
	Sign. Diff.	n.s.	n.s.	0.90*	1.45*

Results of the Canadian Subjects' Performance

Three out of the eight comparisons showed significant results which supports Hypothesis Three. The Canadian subjects understood the Easter dialogue significantly better than the Spring Festival dialogue as measured by the total scores on the informal version and by implicit questions on both versions. Their lower performance on the implicit questions dealing with the Spring Festival dialogue, as compared with the Easter dialogue, can be explained by their lack of background knowledge of the Spring Festival. However, contrary to what might be expected, their performance on the Spring Festival dialogue was significantly better than on the Easter dialogue in informal style when measured by questions relating to slang and colloquialisms. This phenomenon was explained by the Canadian subjects in

their debriefing questionnaires. Many of them reported that since the Spring Festival dialogue was something new to them, it held their attention more than the Easter dialogue did whose content was so familiar that they did not focus as well on the material. As a result, they tended to remember explicit information better in the case of the Spring Festival dialogue (see Table 31).

Table 31

A Summary of the Canadian Subjects' Performance on the Spring Festival and Easter Dialogues

		Total	Explicit	Slang	Implicit
semi-formal version	Mean (Easter)	11.30	5.05	2.90	6.25
	Mean (Spring)	9.95	5.95	3.10	4.00
	Sig. Diff.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	2.25*
informal version	Mean (Easter)	11.85	5.55	2.95	6.30
	Mean (Spring)	9.85	6.00	3.85	3.85
	Sign. Diff.	2.00*	n.s.	0.90*	2.45*

Hypothesis Four is supported by all eight comparisons, none of which showed any significant effect of style on the Canadian subjects' listening comprehension when measured by either the Easter dialogue or the Spring Festival dialogue (see Table 32).

Table 32

Significant Results of the Canadian Subjects' Performance on the Informal and Semi-formal Versions

		Total	Explicit	Slang	Implicit
Spring Fest. dialogue	Mean (informal)	9.85	6.00	3.85	3.85
	Mean (semi-formal)	9.95	5.95	3.10	4.00
	Sig. Diff.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Easter dialogue	Mean (informal)	11.85	5.55	2.95	6.30
	Mean (semi-formal)	11.30	5.05	2.90	6.25
	Sign. Diff.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

The Results of the Comparison Between the Chinese and the Canadian Subjects

Two out of the eight comparisons showed significant results which supports Hypothesis Five. The Chinese subjects comprehended the Spring Festival dialogue significantly better than the Canadian subjects when tested on their comprehension of implicit information (see Table 33).

Table 33

Significant Results of the Chinese and Canadian Subjects' Performance on the Spring Festival Dialogue

		Total	Explicit	Slang	Implicit
semi-formal version	Mean (Chinese)	12.00	5.95	3.35	6.05
	Mean (Canadian)	9.95	5.95	3.10	4.00
	Sig. Diff.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	2.05*
informal version	Mean (Chinese)	11.45	4.45	2.00	7.00
	Mean (Canadian)	9.85	6.00	3.85	3.85
	Sign. Diff.	n.s.	1.55*	1.85*	3.15*

It is interesting to note that the Canadian subjects understood the Spring Festival dialogue in informal style significantly better than the Chinese subjects when measured by explicit questions and questions relating to slang and colloquialisms (see Table 33). This indicates that the Chinese subjects were weaker than the Canadian subjects in dealing with informal speech. Even though the Chinese subjects had greater background knowledge about the Spring Festival they did not perform as well as the Canadian subjects on the informal version but performed better than the Canadian subjects on the semi-formal version of the Spring Festival dialogue.

The fact that the Chinese subjects achieved better scores on implicit questions than on explicit questions in the Spring Festival dialogue indicates that cultural content has more effect on the subjects' listening

comprehension when measured by implicit questions than by the explicit questions.

That Canadian subjects understood the Easter dialogue significantly better than the Chinese subjects is shown by all eight comparisons (see Table 34). This indicates that lack of appropriate cultural schemata about Easter has greatly affected the Chinese ESL students' listening comprehension.

Table 34

Significant Results of the Chinese and Canadian Subjects' Performance on the Easter Dialogue

		Total	Explicit	Slang	Implicit
semi-formal version	Mean (Chinese)	4.55	2.55	1.95	2.00
	Mean (Canadian)	11.30	5.05	2.90	6.25
	Sig. Diff.	6.75*	2.50*	0.95*	4.25*
informal version	Mean (Chinese)	5.60	2.15	1.05	3.45
	Mean (Canadian)	11.85	5.55	2.95	6.30
	Sign. Diff.	6.25*	3.40*	1.90*	2.85*

Discussion of the Results of the Listening Comprehension Test

Effect of Cultural Background Knowledge on the Chinese Subjects

In their answer to implicit questions, many of the Chinese subjects were unable to cope with the implied meaning of the Easter dialogue because of their lack of cultural background knowledge about Easter.

Mary: ... ... Then we started an egg hunt.

John: Yeah same here! My nephews and nieces looked like crazy for the chocolate eggs I hid the night before. The house was crawling with 'em.

(informal version of the Easter dialogue)

Mary: ... Then the kids started an egg hunt.

John: We did the same. My nephews and nieces searched for the chocolate eggs I had hidden the night before all over the house.

(semi-formal version of the Easter dialogue)

Question #11 Which of the following did John's nephews and nieces most likely believe had hidden the chocolate eggs?

a. John
b. John's mom
c. a chicken
d. a rabbit*
e. the Infant Jesus

Five Chinese subjects (12.5 %) chose D (a rabbit) as the correct answer in Question #11. Nine subjects (22.5%) chose C (a chicken) because they did not know that in western tradition a rabbit is supposed to hide eggs during

Easter. Instead, they interpreted this according to the common sense: a chicken is related most often to eggs.

Eight subjects (20%) chose E (the Infant Jesus) owing to their general knowledge about Easter which is related to Jesus Christ. But they did not know the specific custom of egg hunting during Easter and therefore failed to get the correct answer to this question. The following is another example of the effect of cultural background knowledge:

John: I hard-boiled 'em and then helped my nephews and nieces dye them and then we put 'em on the dinning room table. To top it off we also put flowers beside them.

(informal version of Easter dialogue)

John: First I hard-boiled the eggs. Then I helped my nephews and nieces dye the eggs. Then we put them on the dining room table for decoration along with some flowers.

(semi-formal version of the Easter dialogue)

Question # 12 What kind of flowers did John most likely put on the table?

a. roses
b. lilacs
c. violets
d. lilies*
e. lotuses

Only two Chinese subjects chose D (lilies) as the correct answer in Question #12. Sixteen subjects (40%) chose A (roses). To a Chinese, red is a symbol of happiness, and most roses are red.

Question #13 Eggs are associated with this holiday because they are

a. a symbol of a family reunion
b. a symbol of the birth of Christ
c. a symbol of new life*
d. a symbol of the crucifixion of Christ
e. Both B and C

Eight subjects (20%) chose C (a symbol of new life) as the correct answer in Question #13. Twelve subjects (30%) chose B because they confused Easter with Christmas and related Easter to the birth of Christ. Seven subjects (17.5%) also confused Easter with Christmas and chose E. Another seven subjects chose A. According to Chinese custom, an egg is a symbol of family reunion because of its round shape. In Chinese, the sound of the word for "round" is homophonic with the sound of the word for "family reunion". Another example is given below:

John: Sure, we got up real early that day and went to church. The church was really decked out. It was a neat service.
(informal version of the Easter dialogue)

John: We got up very early and went to church. The church was specially decorated. It was a very nice service.
(semi-formal version of the Easter dialogue)

Question #16 On Sunday the church John went to was decorated most likely with

a. red
b. blue
c. white*
d. purple
e. yellow

Nine subjects (22.5%) chose C (white) as the correct answer in this question. Eleven subjects (27.5%) chose A because they interpreted this question according to the Chinese culture in which red is the color for happy occasions.

Since none of the subjects had experienced Easter in Canada, many of them failed to recognize that Easter was talked about in this dialogue.

Question #20 Which holiday are the two speakers talking about?

a. Christmas
b. Thanksgiving
c. Easter*
d. Halloween
e. St. Valentine's Day

Fourteen subjects (35%) chose C as the correct answer in Question #20. Nine subjects (22.5%) chose A and confused Easter with Christmas because Christmas was somewhat familiar to many Chinese students. Their familiarity with Christmas was also shown by the interview and the background questionnaire. Seven subjects (17.5%) chose B because most of the subjects had experienced Thanksgiving in Canada before the data were collected. Perhaps this holiday came to their mind as they answered the question.

Effect of Informal Style on the Chinese Subjects

Many Chinese subjects were affected by the use of informal speech in the dialogues. In the explicit questions, there are five questions to test the effect of informal style. In the informal version of the two dialogues, there are many slang and colloquial expressions.

An example of the use of slang in the Easter dialogue is given below:

Mary: What didya do there?

John: Saturday we went house-hopping 'cause each relative wanted us to visit their place. I pigged out all day and felt like hell afterwards.

(informal version of the Easter dialogue)

Question # 4. What did John do on Saturday ?

a. went out to have a picnic
b. ate too much*
c. hunted for eggs
d. watched the movie "Like Hell" on TV
e. went to church

Only one subject chose B as the correct answer in Question #4. Forty percent of the subjects thought "pig out" meant "go out to have a picnic" and thus chose A.

Another example of the effect of the use of slang expressions in the informal version of the Easter dialogue is as follows:

John: Well, a lot of the family came over for supper. The girls did the cooking in the kitchen and the guys were couch potatoes parked in front of the tube watching sports (informal version of the Easter dialogue).

Question #7. What did the men do while the women were cooking?

a. ate potato chips
b. parked the car in front of the house
c. watched TV*
d. played with a tube
e. sat on the couch talking

Six subjects (30%) chose C (watched TV) as the correct answer, while 20% thought that couch potatoes had something to do with potato chips. Another 20% chose E (sat on the couch talking). Another example is given below:

Mary: What' cha get ?
John: Wanna guess? Oh, I gotta run. Catch ya later.

Question #10. Which of the following is true?

a. John had to catch his bus
b. John wanted to do some running
c. John was too busy to continue the conversation*
d. John had run into some trouble
e. none of the above

Four (20%) subjects chose C as the correct answer. Fifteen percent of the subjects chose A because they might take "run" for its literal meaning. Another 15% chose B because they seemed to remember the word "catch"

but failed to grasp the meaning of "catch ya later".

Many Chinese students had difficulty in distinguishing different styles. For example:

Question #14 Which of the following styles is used in the dialogue?

a. very informal
b. informal
c. semi-formal*
d. formal
e. extremely formal

In the semi-formal version group, three out of twenty subjects in the semi-formal version group chose A and eight subjects chose B. These subjects had difficulty in identifying semi-formal style.

Effect of Cultural Background on Canadian Subjects

Many Canadian subjects, like Chinese subjects, were affected by cultural content schemata. The following are some examples of how they were affected by differences between the Chinese and Canadian cultures as shown in their answers to implicit questions about the Spring Festival dialogue.

Question #13. What color of paper did John's wife most likely buy?

a. green
b. red*
c. yellow
d. blue
e. white

Question #16. Which festival are the two speakers mainly talking about?

a. Dragon Boat Festival
b. Chinese Halloween
c. Chinese Christmas
d. Chinese Thanksgiving Day
e. the Spring Festival*

Twelve (30%) subjects chose C in Question #16. Since Christmas is the most popular holiday in Canada, it is quite natural for the subjects to take the Spring Festival, the biggest festival in China, for Christmas.

Although three subjects chose E (the Spring Festival) in Question #16 as the correct answer, they didn't know that red is the most popular color during Spring Festival. To them, green should be the color for the season of spring and therefore they chose E (green) in Question #13. While they are right logically, this is not appropriate for the Chinese custom.

Two subjects chose C (Chinese Christmas) in Question #16 and also chose A (green) in Question #13.

Question #17. When is this festival celebrated?

a. in March or April
b. in May or June
c. in July or August
d. in November or December
e. in January or February*

Seven subjects (17.5%) chose E (Spring Festival) in Question #16 and consequently chose A (March or April) in Question #17 because they thought Spring Festival should be in the season of spring. Two subjects chose A (Dragon Boat Festival) in Question #16 and consequently they chose C (in July or August) in Question #17 because they thought that the Dragon Boat Festival should be in summer. Three subjects chose C (Chinese Christmas) and consequently chose D (November or December) in Question #17.

Question #18. What is the other name for this festival?

a. the Chinese May Day
b. the Chinese New Year*
c. the Chinese National Day
d. Mother's Day
e. the Lantern Festival

Six subjects (15%) chose Chinese Christmas in Question # 16 and Chinese New Year in Question #18. They may have related Christmas to New Year according to the western concept.

Question #15. Who was most likely setting off firecrackers?

a. foreign tourists
b. children*
c. people employed to do this job
d. movie stars
e. famous singers and dancers

Twelve subjects (30%) chose B as the correct answer in Question #15. Twenty subjects (50%) chose C, since in Canada specially-trained people are often employed to do the job of setting off firecrackers. In China, however, it is quite common for children to set off firecrackers during the Spring Festival.

Since the Canadian subjects come from different cultural backgrounds, they had different interpretations of the Easter dialogue in some places. For example, a subject from the Dutch culture said in the questionnaire "Dialogue 2 (Easter dialogue) had implicit questions differing from the cultural aspects I was raised with, i.e. Dutch culture." He explained why he chose "John" instead of "rabbit" in Question #11, saying that Dutch people don't believe in the concept of rabbits hiding eggs. In question #12, this Dutch subject didn't choose lilies because, according to what he said, lilies are not Easter flowers for the Dutch.

Question #11. Which of the following did John's nephews and nieces most likely believe had hidden the chocolate eggs?

a. John
b. John's mom
c. a chicken
d. a rabbit*
e. the Infant Jesus

Question #12. What kind of flowers did John most likely put on the table?

a. roses
b. lilacs
c. violets
d. lilies*
e. lotuses

RESULTS OF OTHER COMPARISONS

One-way analysis of variance with repeated measures and Bonferroni test were performed to see whether there was any significant effect caused by the order of presentation of the two dialogues on both the Chinese and the Canadian subjects' performance on the Easter and the Spring Festival dialogues. The results showed that there was a significant difference in the order of presenting the Easter dialogue to the Canadian subjects, that is, the Canadian subjects performed significantly better on the Easter dialogue when they listened to the Easter dialogue after the Spring Festival dialogue (Sign. Diff. = 2.35*). (See Table 35.) There was a possibility that on hearing the dialogue about the Spring Festival the Canadians may have assumed that they were going to have to compare this dialogue with the Easter dialogue which followed and so paid greater attention to the Easter dialogue than did the Canadians for whom the order was reversed. There was no significant effect of order in the presentation of the two dialogues on the Chinese subjects' performance both on the Easter dialogue and on the Spring Festival dialogue.

Table 35

The Effect of the Order Factor on the Canadian Subjects

	Mean Scores (Easter 1st)	Mean Scores (Easter 2nd)	S. E.	D. F.	Sign. Diff.
Order	10.40	12.75	0.76	1, 69.85	2.35*

One-way analysis of variance with repeated measures was performed to see if there were any significant differences between the performance of Chinese subjects from the north of China and those from the south of China when measured by the total scores on the Easter dialogue and by the total scores on the Spring Festival dialogue. The results did not show significant differences between these two groups of subjects [F (1, 38) = 3.18, $p > .05$]. (See Table 36.) This indicates that the Spring Festival dialogue includes general customs of this festival which are shared by both the northerners and the southerners.

Table 36

A Comparison Between the Performance of Chinese Southerners and Northerners

		North of China	South of China
Easter	Mean Scores	4.65	5.50
	Std. Dev.	1.69	1.93
Spr. Fest.	Mean Scores	12.10	11.35
	Std. Dev.	2.35	3.18

The results of one-way analysis of variance showed no significant difference between the Chinese subjects who had been in Canada for six to nine months and those who had been in Canada for one to four months when measured by the total scores on Easter dialogue and by the total scores on Spring Festival dialogue [F (1, 38) = 0.74, $p > .05$]. (See Table 37.) This indicates that difference in length of stay in Canada within one year did not produce an effect on the Chinese subjects' listening comprehension. It also indicates that the background knowledge of Easter customs is similar among the Chinese subjects.

Table 37

A Comparison of the Performance of the Chinese Subjects with Different Length of Residence in Canada

		1 - 4 months	6 - 10 months
Easter	Mean Scores	4.85	5.19
	Std. Dev.	1.72	1.92
Spr. Fest.	Mean Scores	10.92	12.11
	Std. Dev.	3.38	2.42

The results of one-way analysis of variance showed no significant difference between the Chinese subjects who hold a Bachelor's degree only and those who hold a Master's or Ph. D. degree when measured by the total scores on the Easter dialogue and by the total scores on the Spring Festival dialogue [F (1, 38) = 0.07, p > .05]. (See Table 38.) Since English is taught to undergraduate students of science and engineering and continues to be taught to postgraduate students in China, postgraduate students can have more years of formal English study. The statistical results of the study indicate that difference in length of formal English study did not produce an effect on the Chinese subjects' listening comprehension.

Table 38

A Comparison of the Performance of the Chinese Subjects' with Different Educational Background

		Ph. D. and Master's	Bachelor's
Easter	Mean Scores	5.36	4.42
	Std. Dev.	1.85	1.73
Spr. Fest.	Mean Scores	11.93	11.25
	Std. Dev.	2.49	3.44

ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Two kinds of questionnaires were developed for the study: a debriefing questionnaire and a background information questionnaire. The debriefing questionnaire was the same for both the Chinese and Canadian subjects. The background questionnaire for the Chinese subjects was more detailed than the one for the Canadian subjects.

Analysis of the Debriefing Questionnaire for the Chinese Subjects

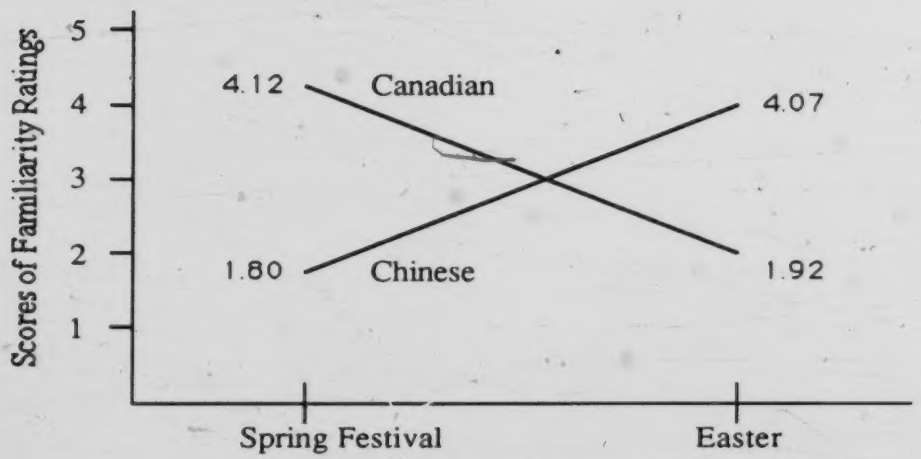
The debriefing questionnaire was designed to determine the subjects' prior familiarity with the information in the Spring Festival and Easter dialogues on a 1 to 5 scale (1 = all of it, 5 = none of it), and their rating of the degree of difficulty of grammar, vocabulary, and content as well as the overall organization of the two dialogues on a 1 to 5 scale (1 = very easy, 5 = very difficult). This rating method was adopted from the method used by P. Carrell (1987) in her research on schema theory. The questionnaire also sought information about which dialogue subjects found to be more difficult and the reasons for this.

Three-Way ANOVA with repeated measures was performed on the data to see if there were significant interactions for the three factors: cultural background of the subjects, style of speech, and cultural origin of the dialogues as measured by subjects' ratings of their familiarity with the dialogues and the degree of difficulties of grammar, vocabulary, content , and overall organization of the dialogues. These five measures are dependent variables. The results showed that there were significant interaction between the cultural background of the subjects and the cultural origin of the dialogues (Culture x Dialogue) with the informal and semi-formal versions combined as measured by all five dependent

variables. But there was no significant interaction between cultural background of the subjects and style (Culture x Style) nor between the cultural origin of the dialogues and style (Dialogue x Style). Neither were there significant three way interactions (Culture x Style x Dialogue).

1. When measured by the subjects' rating of the degree of their familiarity with the dialogues, there was a significant two-way interaction between the cultural background of the subjects and the cultural origin of the dialogues [Culture x Dialogue, F (1, 76) = 367.84, p < .05]. Figure 13 shows that the Chinese subjects had a higher level of unfamiliarity with the Easter dialogue than with the Spring Festival dialogue and that the Canadian subjects had a higher level of unfamiliarity with the Spring Festival dialogue than with the Easter dialogue.

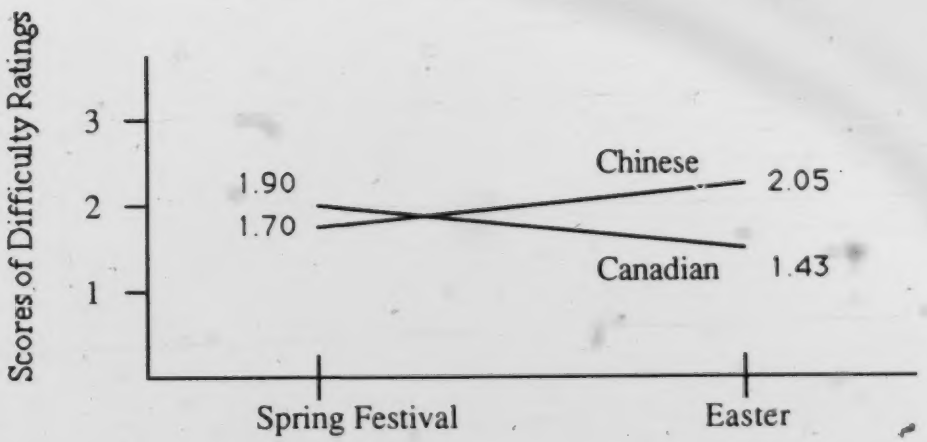
Figure 13
Culture x Dialogue Interaction When Measured
by Rating of Familiarity



2. When measured by the subjects' rating of the degree of difficulty with grammar, there was a significant Culture x Dialogue interaction , [F (1, 76) = 21.09, $p < .05$]. This indicates that the Chinese subjects rated the level of difficulty of grammar in the Easter dialogue higher than in the Spring Festival dialogue. The Canadian subjects rated the level of difficulty of grammar in the Spring Festival dialogue higher than in the Easter dialogue (see Figure 14).

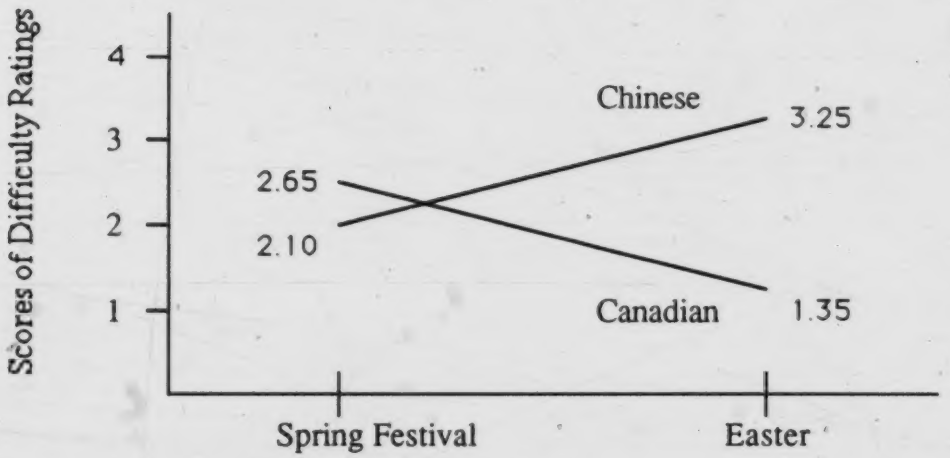
Figure 14

Culture x Dialogue Interaction When Measured by Rating of Difficulty of Grammar



3. When measured by the subjects' rating of the degree of difficulty of vocabulary, there was a significant two-way interaction [Culture x Dialogue, $F(1, 76) = 114.33$, $p < .05$]. The Chinese subjects rated the level of difficulty of vocabulary in the Easter dialogue higher than that in the Spring Festival dialogue. The Canadian subjects rated vocabulary in the Spring Festival dialogue more difficult than in the Easter dialogue (see Figure 15).

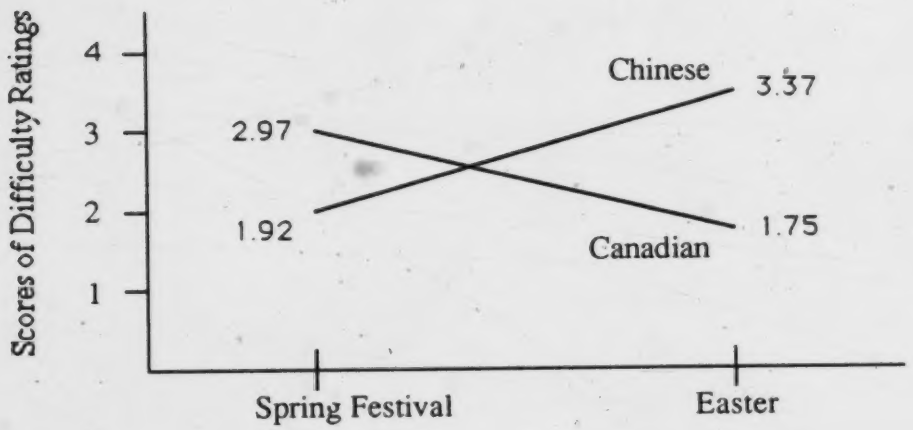
Figure 15
Culture x Dialogue Interaction When Measured
by Rating of Difficulty of Vocabulary



4. When measured by the subjects' rating of difficulty of content, there was a significant two-way interaction [Culture x Dialogue, F (1, 76) = 108.39, $p < .05$]. The Chinese subjects rated the level of difficulty of the content of the Easter dialogue much higher than that of the Spring Festival dialogue. The Canadian subjects rated the content of the Spring Festival dialogue as much more difficult than that of the Easter dialogue (see Figure 16).

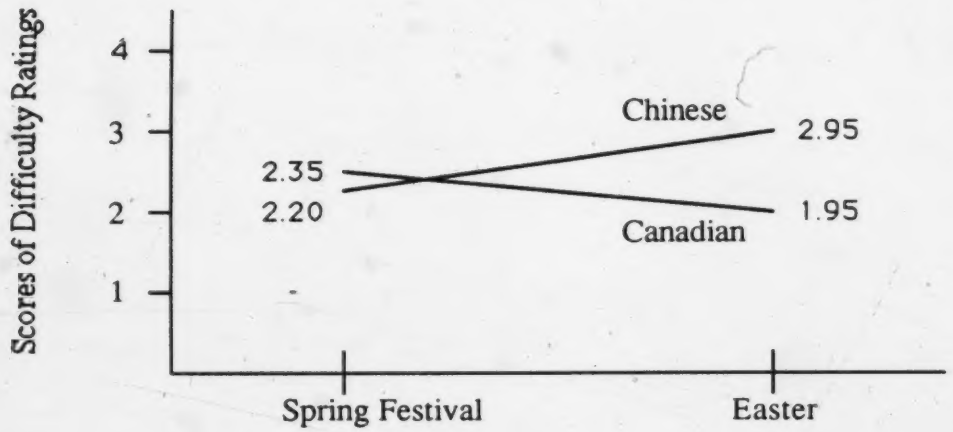
Figure 16

Culture x Dialogue Interaction When Measured by Rating of Difficulty of Content



5. When measured by the subjects' rating of the degree of difficulty of organization, there was a significant Culture x Dialogue interaction [$F(1, 76) = 50.13, p < .05$]. The Chinese subjects rated the organization in the Easter dialogue more difficult than in the Spring Festival dialogue. The Canadian subjects rated the level of difficulty of the organization in the Spring Festival dialogue higher than that in the Easter dialogue (see Figure 17).

Figure 17
Culture x Dialogue Interaction When Measured
by Rating of Difficulty of Organization



Student-Newman-Keuls (SNK) tests (post-hoc tests) were performed to make pair-wise comparisons of cell means as measured by the subjects' rating of degree of familiarity with the content of the dialogues and their ratings of the degree of difficulty in grammar, vocabulary, content, and organization of the two dialogues. The results of the SNK tests are as follows.

The Chinese Subjects' Rating of Their Degree of Prior Familiarity with the Spring Festival and Easter Dialogues

The Chinese subjects' rating of their degree of prior familiarity with the information in the dialogues was calculated in terms of mean scores, ranging from one to five (the higher the score, the lower the degree of prior familiarity).

The statistical analysis showed that there was a significant difference between the Chinese subjects' rating of their prior familiarity with the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 1.80) and with the Easter dialogue (mean = 4.07) when the informal and semi-formal version groups were combined (refer to Table 39). This corresponded with the results of the listening comprehension tests in which the Chinese subjects achieved significantly better scores on the Spring Festival dialogue than on the Easter dialogue in both informal and semi-formal styles. This indicated that unfamiliarity with the cultural content of the Easter dialogue greatly affected the Chinese subjects' comprehension of this dialogue.

Table 39

The Chinese Subjects' Rating of Their Prior Familiarity with the Easter and Spring Festival Dialogues

	Mean Scores (Easter)	Mean Scores (S. F.)	S. E.	D. F.	Sign. Diff.
Familiarity	4.07	1.80	0.16	1, 76	2.27*

* indicates significant difference

The Chinese Subjects' Rating of the Degree of Difficulty of the Spring Festival and the Easter Dialogues

The Chinese subjects' rating of the degree of difficulty of the dialogues was calculated in terms of mean scores, ranging from one to five (the higher the score, the higher the degree of difficulty). The SNK tests showed that the Chinese subjects rated the degree of difficulty of grammar in the Easter dialogue (mean = 2.05) significantly higher than that in the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 1.70) with the informal version and semi-formal version combined. They also rated the vocabulary significantly more difficult in the Easter dialogue (mean = 3.25) than in the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 2.10). The most obvious difference between their rating of the two dialogues was in their perception of the degree of difficulty of content, with the Easter dialogue (mean = 3.37) seen as significantly more difficult than the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 1.92). In the item on overall organization of the dialogues, the subjects also found the Easter dialogue (mean = 2.95) significantly more difficult than the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 2.20) (Refer to Table 40).

Table 40

The Chinese Subjects' Rating of Degree of Difficulty with the Easter and Spring Festival Dialogues

degree of difficulty	Mean Scores (Easter)	Mean Scores (S. F.)	S. E	D. F.	Sign. Diff.
grammer	2.05	1.70	0.13	1, 76	0.35*
vocabulary	3.25	2.10	0.16	1, 76	1.15*
content	3.37	1.92	0.18	1, 76	1.45*
organization	2.95	2.20	0.11	1, 76	0.75*

In reality, potential differences in grammar, vocabulary and overall organization in the Easter and the Spring Festival dialogues were controlled by using T-units in the case of syntactic difficulty and chronological linear order in the organization. The level of difficulty of vocabulary was controlled using procedures developed by West (1953). The only difference existing between the two dialogues was cultural content. Therefore, it would seem that cultural difference affects the subjects enough to produce an illusion of difficulty in other aspects as well.

Statistical analysis does not show any significant differences between the Chinese subjects' ratings of the informal and semi-formal versions. This did not agree with the statistical results of the Chinese subjects' performance on the listening comprehension tests in which three out of the eight comparisons showed significant differences between the two versions. This indicates that the Chinese subjects did not have a very good sense of the relative ease or difficulty of informal and semi-formal styles for them and that they overrated their comprehension of the informal version

relative to the level of the listening comprehension tests. This may have been due to what Carrell called "the lack of metacognitive sensitivity" (Carrell, 1987, p. 472).

Reasons for the Difficulties

In the item asking subjects to indicate which dialogue was found to be more difficult, 100% of the Chinese subjects in the informal version group reported that the Easter dialogue was more difficult than the Spring Festival dialogue. The reasons for this were as follows:

1) Eighty percent of the subjects found the dialogue more difficult because of their unfamiliarity with the cultural content.
2) Five percent attributed the difficulty to their unfamiliarity with the accent of the speakers.
3) Eighty percent reported unfamiliarity with certain vocabulary as one of the reasons.
4) Seventy-five percent thought that slang and colloquialisms were the reasons.
5) Fifteen percent found that the speech was not clear.
6) Five percent found that the speed of speech was too fast.

As for the dialogue about the Spring Festival in the informal version, 100% of the subjects found it easier to understand than the Easter dialogue. The reasons given were as follows.

1) Ninety percent of the subjects attributed their lack of difficulty to their familiarity with the cultural content.
2) Sixty percent found that slang and colloquialisms didn't hinder their comprehension of the dialogue because they were familiar with the content.
3) Twenty percent found that the speech was slower than that of the Easter dialogue.

4) Fifteen percent found that the speech was clearer than that of the Easter dialogue.
5) Ten percent found that their familiarity with the accent was the reason why they felt that the dialogue was easier.

In the semi-formal version group, 95% of the Chinese subjects found that the Easter dialogue was more difficult for the following reasons:

1) Eighty-five percent of the subjects found that their unfamiliarity with the cultural content resulted in their perception of the passage as being difficult.
2) Fifty-five percent found that unfamiliar vocabulary caused the problem.
3) Fifty percent found that slang and colloquialisms were the source of their difficulty.
4) Ten percent found the speed to be too fast.
5) Five percent found the speech to be unclear.

In the semi-formal version group, one subject found the Spring Festival dialogue to be more difficult because of the accent and speed of the speech. Ninety-five percent of the subjects found the dialogue easier. Their reasons were as follows:

1) Ninety-five percent of the subjects found that their familiarity with the cultural content aided their comprehension.
2) Fifty-five percent found that because they were familiar with the content, slang and colloquialisms didn't hinder their comprehension of this dialogue.
3) Five percent found that their familiarity with the accent was one of the reasons for their ability to comprehend the passage.

Analysis of the Debriefing Questionnaire for the Canadian Subjects

The Canadian subjects were also asked to fill in a debriefing questionnaire immediately after completing the listening tests. The analysis of the results of this questionnaire is given below.

The Canadian Subjects' Rating of Their Degree of Prior Familiarity with the Easter and the Spring Festival Dialogues

The mean score assessing the Canadian subjects' prior familiarity with the Spring Festival was 4.12 (indicating a high level of unfamiliarity) and the score on the Easter dialogue was 1.92 when the informal and semi-formal versions were combined. This corresponds with the results of the listening comprehension tests in which they achieved significantly better scores on the comprehension of the Easter dialogue (Refer to Table 41).

Table 41

The Canadian Subjects' Rating of Their Prior Familiarity with the Easter and Spring Festival Dialogues

	Mean Scores (Easter)	Mean Scores (S. F.)	S. E.	D. F.	Sign. Diff.
Familiarity	1.92	4.12	0.16	1, 76	2.20*

The Canadian Subjects' Rating of the Degree of Difficulty of the Easter and the Spring Festival Dialogues

In the item asking subjects to rate the degree of difficulty of the dialogues, the Canadian subjects rated the degree of difficulty of grammar in the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 1.90) significantly higher than in the Easter dialogue (mean = 1.43) with the informal and semi-formal versions combined. They also rated the degree of difficulty of vocabulary significantly higher in the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 2.65) than in the Easter dialogue (mean = 1.35). An obvious difference between their rating of the two dialogues was also reflected in their perception of the degree of difficulty of content, with the Easter dialogue (mean = 1.75) seen as significantly less difficult than the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 2.97). This corresponds to their rating of prior familiarity with these two dialogues. In the item on the overall organization of the dialogues, the subjects found the Spring Festival dialogue (mean = 2.35) to be significantly more difficult than the Easter dialogue (mean = 1.95) (Refer to Table 42).

There was no significant difference between the Canadian subjects' rating of the degree of difficulty of the informal and semi-formal versions of the two dialogues. This corresponded to their performance in the listening comprehension tests. Compared with the Chinese subjects, the Canadian subjects had a better sense of how easy or difficult a style was for them.

Table 42

The Canadian Subjects' Rating of Degree of Difficulty with the Easter and Spring Festival Dialogues

degree of difficulty	Mean Scores (Easter)	Mean Scores (S.F.)	S. E.	D. F.	Sign. Diff.
grammer	1.43	1.90	0.13	1, 76	0.47*
vocabulary	1.35	2.65	0.16	1, 76	1.30*
content	1.75	2.97	0.18	1, 76	1.22*
organization	1.95	2.35	0.11	1, 76	0.40*

There was no significant difference between the Canadian subjects' rating of the degree of difficulty of the informal and semi-formal versions of the two dialogues. This corresponded to their performance in the listening comprehension tests. Compared with the Chinese subjects, the Canadian subjects had a better sense of how easy or difficult a style was for them.

Reasons for the Difficulties

In the item asking the subjects to indicate which dialogue they felt to be more difficult, 95% of the Canadian subjects in the informal version group reported that the Spring Festival dialogue was more difficult than the Easter dialogue. Their reasons for this were as follows:

1) Ninety percent of the subjects felt that the Spring Festival dialogue was more difficult due to their unfamiliarity with the cultural content.

2) Fifty percent of the subjects attributed the difficulty to their

unfamiliarity with certain vocabulary in the dialogue.

3) Fifteen percent reported unfamiliarity with certain slang items as one of the reasons.

4) Twenty percent found the speech unclear.

As for the Easter dialogue in the informal version, 95% of the Canadian subjects found it easier to comprehend than the Spring Festival dialogue. The reasons given were as follows.

1) Ninety percent of the subjects found that their familiarity with the cultural content aided their comprehension.
2) Forty percent attributed their lack of difficulty to their familiarity with the accent of the speakers.
3) Thirty percent found that the speech was clearer in the Easter dialogue than in the Spring Festival dialogue.
4) Ten percent found that the speech was slower than that of the Spring Festival dialogue.
5) Sixty-five percent of the subjects reported that because of their familiarity with the cultural content, some slang and colloquialisms did not hinder their comprehension of the Easter dialogue.

In the semi-formal version group, 10% of the subjects found the Spring Festival dialogue to be easier owing to the slow speed of the speech. Ninety percent of the Canadian subjects found that the Spring Festival dialogue was more difficult for the following reasons:

1) Ninety percent of the subjects found that their unfamiliarity with the cultural content resulted in their perception of the passage as being difficult.
2) Sixty percent found that unfamiliar vocabulary caused the problem.
3) Fifty percent found slang and colloquialisms to be the source of

their difficulty.

4) Twenty percent found the speech to be unclear.
5) Ten percent of the subjects found the accent of the speakers unfamiliar.

In the semi-formal version group, two Canadian subjects found the Easter dialogue to be more difficult. One of them reported that he was not familiar with the Easter customs described in the dialogue because he was from the Dutch culture. The other subject found that the speed of the delivery of the Easter dialogue was too fast. Ninety percent of the subjects found the Easter dialogue easier to comprehend. Their reasons were as follows:

1) Eighty percent of the subjects attributed their lack of difficulty to their familiarity with the cultural content.
2) Twenty-five percent found that their familiarity with the accent was one of the reasons for their ability to comprehend the passage.
3) Fifteen percent found that the speech was clearer than that of the Spring Festival dialogue.

Comparisons Between the Ratings of the Chinese and the Canadian Subjects

The Chinese subjects rated their familiarity with the Spring Festival significantly higher than the Canadian subjects did with this dialogue. The Canadian subjects rated the Easter dialogue significantly more familiar than the Chinese subjects rated this dialogue (see Table 43).

As to the degree of difficulty with content, the Chinese subjects rated the Easter dialogue significantly more difficult than the Canadian subjects did. The Canadian subjects rated the Spring Festival significantly more difficult than the Chinese subjects did. (see Table 43).

Table 43

Comparisons Between Ratings of the Chinese and Canadian Subjects

	degree	Mean Scores (Easter)	Mean Scores (S. F.)
Familairity	Chinese	4.07	1.80
	Canadian	1.92	4.12
	S. E.	0.20	0.20
	D. F	1, 136.39	1, 136.39
	Sign. Diff.	2.15*	2.32*
content difficulty	Chinese	3.37	1.92
	Canadian	1.75	2.97
	S. E.	0.22	0.22
	D. F	1, 140.51	1, 140.51
	Sign. Diff.	1.62*	1.05*

Analysis of Background Questionnaire for the Chinese Subjects

The first section of the background questionnaire containing the demographic description of the Chinese subjects is presented in Chapter Three in the section dealing with the description of the sample. In this chapter, the results of the second and third sections of the background questionnaire will be presented and analyzed.

The Chinese Subjects' English Learning Experience in China

A) The Year in Which Subjects Began to Learn English

As indicated in Table 44 (see Appendix F), 70% of the Chinese subjects started learning English between 1975 and 1979, while 15% started learning English between 1970 and 1974 and 5% from 1958 to 1964. Ten percent did not respond to this question.

B) Extent to Which Subjects Were Taught by Native Speakers of English in Their English Classes

As indicated in Table 45 (see Appendix F), 42.5% of the Chinese subjects reported that they had been taught by American teachers in their English classes in China; 5% had been taught by British teachers, and 5% by Canadian teachers. The result of statistical analysis of the data (one-way analysis of variance) did not show a significant difference between the scores of the Chinese subjects who had been taught by native speakers of English and of those who had not [$F\ (1, 38) = 0.90, p > .05$] (see Table 46).

Table 46

A Comparison of the Performance of the Chinese Subjects Who Had Been Taught by Native Speakers of English and Those Who Had Not

		Had been Taught	Had Not Been
Easter	Mean Scores	5.23	4.89
	Std. Dev.	2.14	1.45
Spr. Fest.	Mean Scores	12.27	11.06
	Std. Dev.	2.95	2.48

C) Hours per Week for English Courses

Seventy percent of the subjects reported having spent two to three hours a week on their English courses while 20% reported having spent six to ten hours per week. Ten percent did not respond to this question (see Table 47, Appendix F).

D) Amount of English Used in English Class

As indicated in Table 48 (see Appendix F), 62.5% of the subjects reported that English was used from 0 to 25% in class instruction while 37.5 % reported that English was used for 40-80% of class instructional time. This indicates that most of the subjects did not have enough opportunity to have sufficient practice in listening comprehension in their English classes because the medium of instruction was mostly Chinese.

E) Activities to Improve English Listening

As for the extent to which the Chinese subjects were involved in listening activities in their English classes when they were in China, 17.5% reported that when they were in China they never listened to English programs on the radio; 37.5% listened to English programs one or two times a week; 27.5% listened for three to four times, and 7.5% listened for five to ten times a week. Ten percent did not respond to this question.

About 22% of the subjects reported that when they were in China they never watched television programs in English, 52.5% reported that they watched television programs one or two times a week; 7.5% reported that they were involved in this activity three or four times a week, while only 2.5% reported involvement in this activity five to ten times a week. Fifteen percent did not respond to this question.

With respect to seeing English films about the daily life of English speaking people, 55% of the subjects reported that when they were in China they were never in this activity; 32.5% reported that they saw such films one or two times a week, and 12.5% did not respond to this question.

About 57% of the subjects reported that they never saw films about the art and literature of English speaking people; 17.5% saw such films one or two times a week, and 25% did not respond to this question.

About 7% of the subjects never listened to a tape recorder in their English classes; 45% were involved in this activity one or two times a week; 25% listened three or four times a week; 5% listened five to ten times; 17.5% did not respond to the question (see Table 49. Appendix F).

The above report indicates that most of the Chinese subjects did not actively employ audio-visual means to improve listening comprehension when they were in China.

F) Degree of Familiarity with Some Aspects of Western Culture

As indicated in Table 50 (see Appendix F), in terms of holidays, only 5% of the subjects felt that while they were in China they were very familiar with the celebration of Easter in English-speaking countries; 17.5% were somewhat familiar, and 77.5% were unfamiliar with this holiday. Fifteen percent of the subjects felt that they were very familiar with Christmas; 70% were somewhat familiar with Christmas, and 15% were unfamiliar with this holiday. Ten percent believed that they were very familiar with Thanksgiving in North America; 45% were somewhat familiar with Thanksgiving, and 45% were unfamiliar with this holiday. As for Halloween and Valentine's day, only 2.5% of the subjects were very familiar with these holidays; 20% were somewhat familiar with these holidays, and 77.5% were unfamiliar with them. The above indicates that when they were in China most of the Chinese subjects were not familiar with major holidays in English-speaking countries.

On the topic of grocery shopping in Canada, 7.5% of the subjects were very familiar with this aspect of daily life; 15% were somewhat familiar with it, and 77.5 % were unfamiliar with it.

As for eating habits in Canada, 2.5% were very familiar with them; 30% were somewhat familiar with them, and 67.5% were unfamiliar with this aspect of Canadian daily life.

With respect to their familiarity with major sports in Canada, none of the subjects felt that they were very familiar with this topic; 47.5% were somewhat familiar with major sports, and 52.5% were unfamiliar with them.

Ten percent of the subjects reported themselves to be somewhat familiar with popular music in Canada, but 90% of the subjects were unfamiliar with it.

In the item on the degree of familiarity with family relationships in Canada, 30% of the subjects reported themselves to be somewhat familiar with them, 70% being unfamiliar.

The above report showed that most of the Chinese students, when they were in China, were not familiar with various aspects of the culture of English speaking countries, especially about Easter and some other festivals.

G) The Chinese Subjects' Degree of Satisfaction with Teaching of Culture

With respect to the Chinese subjects' degree of satisfaction with the extent to which cultural content was taught in English classes, 10% of the subjects reported that adequate cultural content was given; 35% reported that the cultural content given was somewhat unsatisfactory; 40% reported that inadequate cultural content was given, and 15% reported that the cultural content given was totally inadequate (see Table 51. Appendix F). This indicates that cultural content was not adequately given in English classes in China.

With respect to the subjects' perception of their teacher's use of class time, 2.5% of the subjects reported that they strongly agreed with the statement "We had enough class time to learn culture in the English classes;" 7.5% agreed with this statement, 60% disagreed, and 30% strongly disagreed. This shows that Chinese students did not get enough class time in China to learn about the culture of English speaking countries.

As for the statement "We had enough teaching material for culture," none of the subjects reported that they strongly agreed with the statement; 20% agreed, 52.5% disagreed, 25% strongly disagreed, and 2.5% did not respond to this statement (see Table 52. Appendix F). This indicates that Chinese students did not get adequate teaching material for culture in their English classes in China.

With respect to the Chinese subjects' perception of their teachers' background in terms of the teaching of culture in China, none of the subjects strongly agreed with the statement that "Teachers were familiar with the culture of English speaking countries," 22.5% agreed, 55% disagreed, and 17.5% strongly disagreed. This indicates that most English teachers were not familiar with the culture of English speaking countries. Five percent did not respond to the question (see Table 53. Appendix F).

As indicated in Table 54 (see Appendix F), 5% of the subjects strongly agreed with the statement "Students were interested in learning culture," 75% agreed, 10% disagreed, 5% strongly disagreed, and 5% did not respond to the question. This shows that a majority of the subjects were interested in learning the culture of English speaking countries.

The Chinese Subjects' Experience in Canada

Tables 55 to 61 deal with various aspects of the Chinese subjects' experience in Canada. About seventeen percent of the subjects have lived with Canadian people, while 82.5% have not. Among those who have, 28.6% have lived for less than one month with Canadian people; 42.8% have lived for three to four months, and 28.6% have lived for six to seven months. This indicates that the majority of the subjects have not lived with Canadian people which may be one of the reasons why they lack knowledge about the Canadian people's way of life (see Tables 55 - 56. Appendix F).

As for activities to improve English listening and speaking, 10% of the subjects often speak English outside class, 67.5% sometimes, and 22.5% seldom. Twenty percent often listen to English programs on the radio, 52.5% sometimes, and 27.5% seldom. About 47% often watch TV in English, 40% sometimes, and 12.5% seldom (see Table 57. Appendix F). This shows that a majority of the Chinese subjects sometimes employ these activities to improve their English listening and speaking skills.

As indicated in Table 58, 47.5% of the subjects read Chinese newspapers more often than English ones; 22.5% read the Chinese newspapers the same amount as English ones, and 30% read Chinese newspaper less often than English ones. This indicates that many Chinese subjects use English newspapers as a method to improve their English reading.

Table 59 (see Appendix F) indicates that 50% of the Chinese subjects have joined the Chinese-Canadian Peer Pairing Program and 2.5% have joined the Chinese-Canadian Student Dialogue Club. Of these subjects, 85.7% meet with their peers once or twice a week; 9.5% meet their peers three to five times a week, and 4.8% meet their peers more than five times. However the results of statistical analysis (one-way analysis of variance) did not show any significant difference between the Chinese subjects who had participated in the Chinese-Canadian Peer Pairing Program and those who had not when measured by the total scores on the Easter dialogue and the Spring Festival dialogue respectively [F (1, 38) = 0.95, $p > .05$]. (See Table 60.) This indicates that seven months participation in the cultural exchange programs did not produce a significant effect on the improvement of the Chinese subjects' listening comprehension of dialogues with both familiar cultural content and unfamiliar content.

Table 60

A Comparison of the Chinese Subjects Who Had Taken Part in the Cultural Exchange Programs and Those Who Had Not

		Member	Non-Member
Easter	Mean Scores	5.25	4.90
	Std. Dev.	2.05	1.65
Spr. Fest.	Mean Scores	12.35	11.10
	Std. Dev.	2.64	2.85

Table 61 (see Appendix F) summarizes the Chinese subjects' difficulties upon arrival in Canada. About half of them reported that they had difficulties in listening comprehension owing to unfamiliarity with the accent of the speaker. About 50% found that they had difficulties in understanding because of unfamiliarity with the Canadian culture. About the same percentage of subjects reported speed of speech, use of slang expressions, and omission of syllables as the source of their difficulties. This indicates that, while unfamiliar cultural content is an important factor causing difficulties in listening comprehension for the Chinese subjects, other factors also play a part.

Analysis of the Background Questionnaire for the Canadian Subjects

1. Degree of Familiarity with the Chinese Culture

When asked how many Chinese friends or acquaintances they have, about half of the Canadian subjects reported having one or two; About one

quarter of them said they had more than five Chinese friends or acquaintances. Although most of the subjects have Chinese friends, when asked whether they had celebrated Chinese New Year with their Chinese friends, only one of the Canadian subjects had had this experience. However, this subject celebrated this festival in Malaysia instead of in mainland China. Therefore, none of the subjects experienced this festival in mainland China, and since none of them had been to mainland China, this may explain why most Canadian subjects had difficulty in comprehending the Spring Festival dialogue.

Nearly half of the subjects reported that they seldom went to Chinatown, while sixteen of them had never been there. When asked whether they ate Chinese food, over half of them reported that they had Chinese food sometimes and one quarter of them often had Chinese food. Although most of them like to eat Chinese food, since they had never experienced Chinese New Year, they were not familiar with jiaozi, the special food for this holiday. Therefore, many of them reported that because they were not familiar with the names of Chinese food in the dialogue, they found the Spring Festival dialogue more difficult to understand.

2. The Cultural Origin of the Canadian Subjects

Eleven of the subjects reported that they belong to the German culture; nine reported they belong to the English culture; six belong to the Ukrainian culture; four belong to the French culture. One was of Dutch origin; one each came from the Polish culture, the Scottish culture, the Irish culture, and the Slovak culture. Five of the subjects identified themselves as Canadian without reference to original racial origin. Since the Easter dialogue contains information about egg decoration, a Ukrainian tradition, egg hunting, a German tradition, and hot cross buns, an English

tradition, in general subjects from these cultural groups performed better than other subjects on this dialogue (see Table 62).

3. Degree of Familiarity with Slang and Colloquialisms

Half of the Canadian subjects reported that they were very familiar with the slang and colloquial expressions used in the informal versions of each dialogue. Seventeen of them were somewhat familiar with these expressions and only one said he was unfamiliar with them. Two of the subjects did not respond to this question. This may explain why the Canadian subjects had no difficulty in coping with the informal version of each dialogue.

Summary

The background questionnaire for the Chinese subjects provided insight into the language learning process of the Chinese ESL students. The picture about English teaching situation in China as presented in the questionnaire helped to explain the reasons why the Chinese subjects had difficulties with the Easter dialogue. The background questionnaire for the Canadian subjects also provided some explanation for their difficulties with the Spring Festival dialogue. These questionnaires give a cross-cultural comparison between ESL students and native speakers of English.

Table 62

The Cultural Origin of the Canadian Subjects

	Number	Percentage
German	11	27.5%
British	9	22.5%
Ukrainian	6	15%
Canadian	5	12.5%
French	4	10%
Dutch	1	2.5%
Irish	1	2.5%
Polish	1	2.5%
Scottish	1	2.5%
Slovak	1	2.5%

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW

To obtain more information about how the Chinese subjects feel about the effect of cultural schemata and of other factors on listening comprehension an interview was conducted immediately after the subjects finished their listening task. Eight Chinese subjects took part in the interview on a voluntary basis, five from the group which listened to the informal version of the dialogues and three from the group which listened to the semi-formal version. The interview, conducted in English, was tape recorded and later transcribed. Since the interview was administered

individually and the questions were mostly subject-generated, the number of questions asked and the length of the interview varied from person to person. From the interview, insight has been gained from the subjects as to how cultural background knowledge aided their comprehension as well as problems which they had in listening comprehension.

The Effect of Cultural Background Knowledge on Listening Comprehension

All the subjects interviewed recognized the effect of cultural background knowledge on listening comprehension. From the discussion below between the interviewer and Subject A, we can get some understanding of this effect.

Interviewer: Which dialogue did you find more difficult?

Subject A: Of course the second one.

Interviewer: What is the main reason?

Subject A: I think there are several reasons. The first one is that the first dialogue's content is familiar to me because I come from China. The second reason is that I have not spent any Easter holidays, so I know nothing about this holiday. I think the main reason is about the content. I am not familiar with western culture, so I can't understand.

Interviewer: Did you use your cultural background knowledge to answer the questions for the first dialogue?

Subject A: Of course, I used a lot of the cultural background knowledge. Otherwise I can't understand some of the questions.

Interviewer: Could you tell me a little bit more about this?

Subject A: For example, when they talk about the Spring Festival, I know what they will do in the evening and after the evening. So I can answer some questions concerned about this period of time.

Interviewer: Are you from the South or North of China?

Subject A: I come from the South of China.

Interviewer: Are you familiar with all the customs during the Spring Festival in the North of China?

Subject A: Because I spent five years in the North of China, Beijing, I know some of them.

Interviewer: So that helps you a lot in your understanding of this dialogue.

Subject A: Yes, so I know during the Spring Festival, they eat jiaozi. But in the South of China, we don't eat jiaozi.

This subject's perception of the effect of the cultural background knowledge corresponds with his performance on the listening task. He achieved a higher score in the Spring Festival dialogue than in the Easter dialogue. Although he is from the South of China, his score on the Spring Festival dialogue is as high as those of the subjects from the North of China because of his several years experience in the North of China.

The following is an excerpt from the interview with Subject B:

Interviewer: Which dialogue did you find more difficult?

Subject B: Of course Dialogue One.

Interviewer: What is the main reason for this?

Subject B: Just because I'm not familiar with the cultural background. This is the main reason. Just because I don't know the background. Probably, some expressions and words I know, but I don't know the

background, I just misunderstand or sometimes I can't remember what they are talking about.

Interviewer: Did you use cultural background knowledge to answer the questions in Dialogue Two?

Subject B: Yes, sure. Because I'm from China, so I know what's happening in Chinese New Year. We spent it many times. I know what's happening even though I can't understand something like slang, I can also guess from the background which I know.

This subject found that cultural background knowledge is a crucial factor in listening comprehension. To him, cultural background knowledge is more important than linguistic competence. Without cultural background knowledge about the text being heard, he had difficulty in remembering information and retrieving information when he answered the questions even though he knew most of the words in the Easter dialogue.

Subject C gave a fuller description of his perception of the role of cultural schemata:

Interviewer: Which dialogue did you find more difficult?

Subject B: I think the difficult problem is the content. Sometimes if you're familiar with the content, or in this article, what they say, you don't need to concentrate, you just listen and remember it. When they ask you a question, you just choose one, that's OK. But sometimes you're not familiar with the content, [it] means you don't understand what they say because there are some different customs. So that's very difficult to understand each other, especially for me. I just

study medicine. I don't study much more literature. Most of the time, I just concentrate to remember medical English words and about my work and research. So if they talk about, and in this paper [dialogue], they talk about church and eat something, I think there are some different [differences] between China and Canada. We just know turkey. If they talk about, for example, pie, pizza or something something or talk about much more, we don't understand it. And sometimes we don't remember the words.

Interviewer: So, generally speaking, you find the second dialogue more difficult?

Subject B: Yes, because the first one talk[s] about China and I'm a Chinese and I know something about China, especially about the Spring Festival, Chinese New Year. That's easier for me to listen and answer the questions. But [in] Dialogue Two, the people talk about Canada, some provinces, and some cities and their customs and go[ing] to the church or something, so that's difficult for me to understand. But when they talk about sports or something, that's easy. You know, in China, we don't know much more about church. When we studied in the school, we criticized something about religion. When they talk about church, we don't know anything.

When asked what is the main reason for finding the Easter dialogue more difficult, unfamiliar content or use of slang, Subject C answered:

Subject C: I think the main reason for me is the cultural background.

Interviewer: So you think if you are familiar with the culture, you can understand it much better even though there is slang in it.

Subject C: Yes, it doesn't matter. I can listen and understand the whole content and the whole sentences. But if you don't know the foreign culture, civilization, customs, or some holidays, you totally don't understand it.

Subject C is a medical doctor. In the interview he told the researcher that he was too busy with memorizing medical terms to take part in cultural activities or read books about western culture. More important, since he had never experienced Easter in Canada, he found it very difficult to comprehend the Easter dialogue. He found information about church especially difficult. This corresponds with the result of the study by Markham and Latham on the effect of religion-specific knowledge on the listening comprehension of adult ESL students, in which the Chinese subjects who knew little about Christian religion achieved significantly lower scores than other ESL students who were Christians on the passage about Christian prayer rituals.

Subject D reported that because he had no experience with Easter, he didn't recognize that it was Easter that was being talked about while he listened to the dialogue and thus he got totally lost in his comprehension of this dialogue:

Interviewer: Are you familiar with the way Canadian people celebrate Easter?

Subject D: No. Actually after I came here, I heard of such a word. Maybe before I came here, I saw such a word in the dictionary, but I never paid attention to it. So when I first heard people mention Easter, I knew nothing about it.

Interviewer: Do you think this dialogue is very difficult to understand because you're not familiar with the culture?

Subject D: Yes. Actually, I mistook the holiday in the second dialogue for Christmas because that's the only holiday that's familiar to me.

Effect of Informal Style

The subjects in the informal version group gave reasons why they felt slang and colloquial expressions were difficult. They also explained the interrelationship between cultural background knowledge and style of speech and indicated their roles in language learning. The following is Subject B's point of view:

Interviewer: Did you find some slang and everyday informal English used in the dialogues make them more difficult to understand?

Subject B: Yes, I did.

Interviewer: In your opinion, which plays a more important role in listening comprehension, cultural background knowledge or no use of slang?

Subject B: I think informal expression is OK, but the more important thing is that you should know the cultural background. Then you can grasp the main idea of the talking and then you can guess something. If you don't know the cultural background you don't know what's happening, even though you understand some slang or sometimes probably most of it, you still can't understand some of the dialogue, and when you answer the questions, you miss something, and it's also difficult for you to remember all the things in their talking. And when you answer the questions, probably you can't answer them correctly.

Although Subject B found that slang and colloquialisms in the informal versions made the dialogues difficult to understand to some extent, compared with cultural background knowledge, he thought slang was a minor problem. He found that even though he understood some slang, he still did not have a full understanding of the dialogue with unfamiliar cultural content.

In the following discussion, Subject C gave a similar explanation of how he perceived the effect of informal speech and its relationship with cultural content schemata. He thought cultural background knowledge plays a more important role than the effect of style:

Interviewer: When you talk to Canadian friends, do you find it difficult if they use slang, idioms, and colloquialisms?

Subject C: No. Because when they want to say some slang, after they say this, they give a good explanation for me. So I can understand it well ...

Interviewer: Do you think they use more slang when talking to each other than when talking to you?

Subject C: Yes. Some Canadian friends of mine, when they talk some slang they always say slowly and explain for me. Because, they say, this slang you can't write it in books, you can't find it in a dictionary. So now you have come to Canada, you should learn much more than the book. If you just read the book, you never learn all the slang. So we should teach you extra words. It's the same: when they ask me something about Chinese words which they can't find in the book. Books are very formal.

Subject D cited his own difficulties upon his arrival in Canada to show the importance of learning informal speech of English:

> If you only learn the formal language, it presents you some difficulties in your ordinary life. For example, when I came here, I found it very difficult to open my mouth because every sentence I had learned is a formal one.

The Effect of General Language Ability

Subject E found that cultural background knowledge and language ability play equally important roles in listening comprehension.

Interviewer: Which do you think plays a more important role in listening comprehension, cultural background or no

use of colloquialisms?

Subject E: I'd like to say in this way: Cultural background helps me to understand the second one. But if I have a better language ability, I think there will be no trouble in understanding the first one [the Easter dialogue].

After a little while, the subject gave further explanation of his point of view:

> First of all, if I don't know the background, it's a little bit hard to follow the dialogue. But on the other hand, if I have good language ability, it should not be a trouble.

Improving Listening Comprehension Through Use

During the interview, Subject D gave his view on how to improve listening comprehension efficiently, that is, learning through use:

> ... when I came here, I found some people from Mexico. I found their English is not as good as mine, but their listening, spoken English is much better than mine because they just use the language.

Then he continued to make comparisons between different motivations between Chinese learners and westerners and the different learning methods resulted from the difference in attitudes:

> Maybe, that's the style which a lot of Westerners have. When they learn something, they have very

strong intention to use it. It's very different from a Chinese student. For a Chinese student, they just want to gain high marks. The purpose is totally different. For example, people here study French. They don't want to study in the class. They just want to use it. But in China, people study English just to pass some exams or get a good job.

The Importance of Having Highly Qualified Teachers

Subject D thought that it is very important to learn language through use and that it is very crucial to have highly qualified teachers:

Interviewer: So you think learning language through use is important.

Subject D: Yes. I think that's very important. That's the weak point of traditional style of teaching in China. If you want to teach language in that way that means the teacher has to be highly qualified. If he himself is not highly qualified, he doesn't know how to teach his students. So I don't think you can do nothing about it. If you want to teach how to use a language, you have to know that. But the situation is a lot of English teachers in China don't know how English language works. They can't manage the language very well. As far as I know a lot of students from the English departments have some trouble to read something, understand something. For example, I have several friends from the English department. They have no difficulties to

> analyze structure of sentences, but they had a lot of difficulties to take the reading comprehension in TOEFL or GRE because their reading skill is not highly qualified. For example, my reading speed is not as slow as theirs. My reading skill is much better than theirs. Maybe their concept about grammar is much better than mine.

This subject also criticized the grammar-centered teaching method which is still very popular in China. Finally he made suggestions on how to make use of English newspapers, news broadcast, and movies to improve English, methods which were very efficient for him.

Summary

All of the subjects interviewed felt that cultural background knowledge is a crucial factor in listening comprehension. Most of them felt that although informal speech is also a very important factor, it is less important than cultural content. Some subjects felt that only through use can one learn real English, and having highly qualified teachers is a very important factor in improving English teaching.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part presents a summary of the present study including its purpose, design, and results. The second part presents a discussion of the implications of the study. Recommendations for further research in this area are presented in the final part.

SUMMARY

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the interactive effects of cultural content schemata and style on the listening comprehension ability of Chinese ESL students. The study was designed to elicit answers in response to the following questions:

1. Do cultural content schemata have an effect on ESL listening comprehension? If so, how?
2. Do different styles of speech (informal vs. semi-formal) affect ESL listening comprehension? If so, how?
3. How does style of speech interact with the cultural content schemata in ESL listening comprehension?
4. Are native speakers of English affected by cultural content schemata and style of speech of the text? If so, how do they differ from the Chinese ESL learners mentioned above?

The Design of the Study

The following summarizes the design of the study including the development of test instruments, a description of the subjects and the testing procedure employed.

Development of the Test Instruments

A. The Listening Materials: Dialogues

Two dialogues of approximately 500 words each were developed, each based on a festival from a different culture (the Canadian culture -- Easter vs. the Chinese culture -- the Spring Festival). The rationale for choosing these two holidays for the listening materials was the following:

1. Holidays and festivals tend to reflect people's patterned way of life in many ways.
2. The researcher's experience and familiarity with the Chinese culture were the main reason for the selection of the Chinese culture as the basis for one of the pairs of dialogues.
3. The Spring Festival was chosen because it is the most popular and most elaborately celebrated holiday in mainland China and thus familiar to almost all the Chinese subjects.
4. Easter was chosen because it is one of the more commonly celebrated holidays in the Western World and thus familiar to almost all the Canadian subjects. Since this holiday had never been experienced by the Chinese subjects before the data were collected, the way in which familiar and unfamiliar cultural content affects the listening comprehension of Chinese ESL students and Canadian students could be examined.

Each of the dialogues was written in both informal and semi-formal style. In the informal version of each dialogue, every effort was made to include in the two dialogues the most important features of colloquial English as reflected in pronunciation, syntax, and lexicon, with slang and colloquialisms as a main feature.

B. Test Questions

The format of multiple choice questions was chosen over other formats such as written recall and oral recall in order to minimize writing and speaking factors. Twenty multiple choice questions were developed for each dialogue, the first ten of which were "explicit questions" designed to test the subjects' understanding of the explicit, factual content of the dialogues. Five of the ten explicit questions were designed to test the subjects' understanding of the colloquialisms and slang in the informal version of each dialogue. The remaining ten questions which were implicit in nature, were designed to test understanding of implicit information in the dialogues. Each explicit and implicit question had five answer options. Both the dialogues and test questions were read into a tape recorder with every effort made to make the recording sound as natural as possible.

C. Questionnaires and Interview

Two kinds of questionnaires were developed for the study: a debriefing questionnaire and a background questionnaire. The former was developed to elicit information from both the Chinese and the Canadian subjects with respect to their rating of the degree of their prior familiarity with the information in the texts as well as their rating of the difficulty of grammar, vocabulary, content and the overall organization of the two

dialogues. The questionnaire also sought information about which dialogue subjects found more difficult and the reasons for this.

A background questionnaire was also developed for the Chinese subjects and the Canadian subjects respectively. The background questionnaire for the Chinese subjects was designed to elicit general information, information about the subjects' English study experience in China, and information about their experience in Canada. Retrospective interview techniques were also employed to gather subject-generated data about how they felt about the effect of cultural background knowledge and style of speech on their performance on listening comprehension tests. The interview was conducted shortly after the subjects had completed the comprehension tests.

The Characteristics of the Subjects

The Chinese Subjects

Forty Chinese students from mainland China, 36 males and 4 females, volunteered to participate in the study. All of them were studying or doing research in the University of Alberta at the time the data were collected. Their average age was about 29 years. The same number of males and females was assigned to each of the two groups, because some research has proven that females tend to be better listeners. Three fourths of the subjects were undertaking postgraduate study and the rest were carrying out research as visiting scholars. About half of the subjects were born in the South of China and half in the North. Again, the same number of Northerners and Southerners was assigned to each of the two groups of subjects. The subjects have approximately the same level of English proficiency as judged from their TOEFL and English Proficiency Test scores.

The Canadian Subjects

For the purpose of cross-cultural comparison, 40 Canadian students studying in the University of Alberta were selected for the study. All are native born Canadians and English is their first language. To ensure similarity with the Chinese subjects, most of the Canadian subjects were chosen from the Faculties of Science or Engineering. The greater part of them were undergraduate students in their third or fourth year. Most of them were in their twenties. The purpose of controlling the age of the subjects was to ensure that they could relate to the two dialogues which were written in the tone of students in their twenties. The forty Canadian students were divided into two groups, with seventeen male and three female students in each group.

The Testing Procedure

Most of the Chinese and the Canadian subjects were tested individually. Both the Chinese and the Canadian subjects were assigned to two groups: Group 1 listened to the informal version of each dialogue and Group 2 listened to the semi-formal version. After the subjects were given the necessary instructions orally, they were given the listening materials -- tape-recorded dialogues and comprehension multiple-choice questions. Effects of order of presenting the dialogues were controlled. Immediately after the subjects listened to the dialogues, they were given the multiple-choice questions. Following the listening task, they filled out the debriefing questionnaire and background questionnaires, after which eight of the Chinese subjects were interviewed. The results of the comprehension tests and of the debriefing questionnaire were scored and the results of the study were analyzed.

The Comprehension Test Results

The results were analyzed in view of the following hypotheses:

1. The Chinese subjects will comprehend the dialogue based on the Chinese culture significantly better than the one based on the Canadian culture.
2. The Chinese subjects will perform significantly better on the semi-formal style than on the informal style.
3. The Canadian subjects will comprehend the dialogue based on the Canadian culture significantly better than the one based on the Chinese culture.
4. The Canadian subjects will perform equally well both on the semi-formal style and on the informal style.
5. The Chinese subjects will comprehend the dialogue based on the Chinese culture significantly better than the Canadian subjects.
6. The Canadian subjects will comprehend the dialogue based on the Canadian culture significantly better than the Chinese subjects.

Results of the Chinese Subjects' Performance

The statistical analysis of the results of the comprehension tests supports Hypothesis One by showing that the cultural origin of texts had a significant effect on the Chinese subjects' listening comprehension, that is, they understood the dialogue based on culturally familiar content significantly better than the one based on culturally unfamiliar content. All eight comparisons showed significant results which indicates that cultural content schemata play an important role in the Chinese ESL students'

listening comprehension.

Three out of the eight comparisons showed significant differences supporting Hypothesis Two. The Chinese subjects performed significantly better on the semi-formal version than on the informal version of each dialogue as measured by explicit questions and questions relating to slang and colloquialisms in both dialogues. This indicates that the Chinese students do have difficulties in understanding slang and colloquialisms appearing in informal speech.

Results of the Canadian Subjects' Performance

Hypothesis Three is supported by three out of the eight comparisons which show that the Canadian subjects understood the Easter dialogue significantly better than the Spring Festival dialogue when measured by implicit questions and total question scores. They understood the explicit information in the Spring Festival dialogue significantly better than that in the Easter dialogue. This trend was explained by their comments in the questionnaire, where some of the subjects felt that, because the Spring Festival dialogue was something new to them, it held their attention better than the Easter dialogue which was very familiar to them.

Hypothesis Four is supported by all eight comparisons showing that there were no significant differences in the Canadian subjects' performance on the informal and the semi-formal versions of the Easter and Spring Festival dialogues.

Results of the Comparisons Between the Chinese and Canadian Subjects

The results support Hypothesis Five, showing that the Chinese subjects understood the Spring Festival dialogue significantly better than the Canadian subjects did when measured by implicit questions. However, the Canadian subjects understood the Spring Festival dialogue significantly better than the Chinese subjects did when measured by questions relating to slang and colloquialisms. This indicates that the Canadian students have a better comprehension of informal style than do the Chinese ESL students. This aids them in understanding the explicit information of material of unfamiliar content but not the implicit information.

The results also provide support for Hypothesis Six. The Canadian subjects understood the Easter dialogue significantly better than the Chinese subjects on all measures.

The Analysis of Questionnaires and Interview

Debriefing Questionnaire

The Chinese subjects reported that they were more familiar with the Spring Festival dialogue than with the Easter dialogue. They also rated the degree of difficulty of the content of the Easter dialogue higher than that of the Spring Festival dialogue. This corresponded with the results of the comprehension tests which showed that they understood the Spring Festival dialogue significantly better than the Easter dialogue.

The Canadian subjects rated their degree of unfamiliarity with the Spring Festival dialogue higher than with the Easter dialogue. They also rated the degree of difficulty for the Spring Festival dialogue higher than for the Easter dialogue.

Background Questionnaires for the Chinese and Canadian Subjects

In the background questionnaire, the Chinese subjects reported their experience in English language study in China. A majority of the Chinese subjects reported that very little English was used in class instruction, that is, the Chinese students did not have enough chance to practice listening comprehension in their English classes because the medium of instruction was mostly Chinese.

Most of the Chinese subjects reported that when they were in China, they were unfamiliar with the Easter celebration, eating habits of the Canadian people, major sports, and the family relationships of the Canadian people. Most students felt that the cultural content given in their English classes was inadequate, and that their teachers did not use enough class time to teach culture. Teaching materials were also inadequate, over half of the subjects reporting that teachers were not familiar with the culture of English speaking countries. This indicates that most Chinese students did not have enough chance to be exposed to the culture of English speaking countries when they were in China.

With respect to what difficulties the Chinese subjects had upon their arrival in Canada, most of them reported that they had difficulties in listening comprehension because of their unfamiliarity with the Canadian culture. Over half of the subjects said they had difficulty in comprehending slang and colloquialisms when they first arrived. As for the difficulties which they still have, some of them answered that they have difficulty in understanding lectures when informal English is used. Some of them responded that they have difficulty in understanding their Canadian friends when culturally unfamiliar content is being discussed. The above comments support the belief that unfamiliar cultural content and the use of slang and colloquialisms do create problems for the Chinese subjects' listening comprehension.

Most Canadian subjects reported that they were not familiar with the Chinese culture. None of them had been to China or know the Chinese language. Only one subject had celebrated the Spring Festival, but not in mainland China. Most of them had seldom been to Chinatown.

The Canadian subjects come from different cultural groups, the most numerous of which were members of the German, English, Ukrainian, and French cultures.

The Interview with the Chinese Subjects

The interview with some Chinese subjects shows that the cultural content schemata and speech style are important factors influencing listening comprehension and that the former is even more significant than the latter. This provides further explanation for understanding the language processes of ESL students. The interview also provides insight into how to improve second language teaching methodology.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the present study:

1. Cultural background knowledge of the content area of a text has a significant effect on the Chinese ESL students' listening comprehension on all measures, that is, they understand material with culturally familiar content significantly better than material with culturally unfamiliar content.
2. Style of speech has an effect on the Chinese ESL students' listening comprehension when measured by explicit questions and questions relating to slang and colloquialisms but not on other measures. This shows that this style of speech does not have as much effect as cultural content on Chinese ESL students' listening comprehension.

3. Cultural background knowledge of listening comprehension material has a significant effect on native speakers of English, that is, the Canadian students understand the material about their own native culture significantly better than material based on a foreign culture.
4. Style of speech does not have a significant effect on native speakers of English, that is, the Canadian students understand informal style as easily as semi-formal style.
5. The Chinese ESL students understand the implicit information in the material based on the Chinese culture significantly better than do the Canadian students.
6. The Canadian students understand the material about the Canadian culture significantly better than do the Chinese ESL students.
7. The Subjects' degree of familiarity with the dialogues and their rating of their degree of difficulty in the debriefing questionnaire show support for their statistical results in the comprehension tests.
8. Background questionnaires and interview help to explain the statistical results and to point out specific problems the subjects had.

IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the combined, interactive effects of cultural origin of listening materials and different styles of speech on these Chinese students' listening comprehension. An attempt was made to find out not only the common problems which the students have but also the specific problems each student has, and to find the best way to help them overcome difficulties and to solve their problems in listening comprehension. The results of the statistic analysis of the comprehension tests and the analysis of the questionnaires indicate that almost all of the Chinese subjects have difficulties in comprehending the listening test materials about the Canadian culture, and most of them have difficulties in comprehending colloquial

English speech. Through the interview and questionnaires, many of them reported that they have problems in understanding lectures when informal English is used. In their daily communication with native speakers of English, most of them find it very difficult to understand the other person if an unfamiliar topic is talked about. The background questionnaire has thrown some light on the reasons for this.

In their English study in China most of the students didn't have many opportunities to be exposed to the western culture because in the English classrooms there too much emphasis is placed on the teaching of grammar and translation at the expense of providing the necessary concepts about the culture of the English speaking countries. In the classroom for science students, listening is regarded as the least important skill to be taught. To make matters worse, in most English classrooms, only the formal use of English is taught, even in the listening and conversation class. As a result, students talk like a book and are very weak in comprehending everyday speech.

As a result of lack of exposure to both the Canadian culture and to colloquial English, most of the students encountered numerous difficulties on their arrival in Canada. This factor has also affected their academic study to some extent because of their difficulties in understanding lectures. The significance of the present study lies in identifying students' problems in listening comprehension and in trying to make English teachers in China more aware of the existing weaknesses in teaching methodology, of the urgent need to improve teaching materials, teaching methods, and of the need to train English teachers who are more qualified. All this paradigmatic change is especially indispensable for the English Programs for Going Abroad so as to help the students to be fully prepared before they go to study in English speaking countries.

Implications for English Programs in China

The results of the present study have implications in the following areas:

1. Quality and preparation of EFL teachers
2. Resource material based on the target culture
3. EFL teaching methodology

Quality and Preparation of EFL Teachers

To some extent, the difficulties which the Chinese students have result from their lack of exposure to the target culture in English language classes in China. Their English learning experience reveals that in China the students did not have adequate opportunity to be exposed to the culture of English speaking countries. Therefore, more consideration should be given to the teaching of the target culture to prepare the students for studying abroad. To achieve this step, the quality of English teachers should be improved by providing them with further training in the teaching of a target culture. Teachers should be more familiar with the cultural expression of the group whose language they are teaching and should appreciate the cultural dimensions of the language which they are teaching.

Resource Material Based on the Target Culture

Resource material about the target culture should be more widely used. Reading and listening materials should be developed to include as much of the cultural component as possible, especially at advanced stages of learning. Radio programs, TV programs, and films about the target culture should be employed as much as possible in order to provide authentic materials.

EFL Teaching Methodology

Teaching methodology should be improved through changing grammar-centered and textbook-centered methods into a more communicative approach. A "language through use" approach should be adopted. Students should learn a foreign language not only in a formal situation but they should also be provided with an opportunity to learn English in informal settings, such as practicing listening and speaking in "English corners", at English parties, and in English language competitions.

Implication for Universities in English Speaking Countries

To facilitate the improvement of ESL students' listening comprehension, universities in English speaking countries could show video tapes of professors' lectures to them before they attend the lectures. In this way students could be familiarized with the style of speech (especially the informal one) which professors use in classrooms. Cultural orientation program could be organized for newly arrived ESL students to familiarize them with the new cultural environment and to help them build the necessary cultural schemata which in turn will improve their comprehension of the target language. Since this study did not find a significant effect occurring as a result of the short term cultural exchange program on the Chinese students, long term programs of this kind might have a greater effect on ESL students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Since cultural background knowledge is an important factor which influences ESL students' listening comprehension skill, it is necessary to do more research in this area. The present study has examined the situation of forty Chinese students' listening comprehension with respect to the effects of cultural background knowledge and style of speech on listening comprehension and how these interact. Since the present study is limited, additional research is recommended.

1) Because of the need to control the Chinese subjects' length of residence in Canada, the sample of this study included only 40 Chinese students who had never experienced Easter in Canada before the listening tests were administered. This number is not large enough to represent the whole population of Chinese students at all universities in English speaking countries. Therefore, there is a need to do more research with both a larger sample size and in other universities.

2) The sample of this study was taken mostly from the Faculties of Science and Engineering. The language requirements for these students is different from those of the Faculties of Arts or Education where most Chinese students used to be English majors when they were in China. Because these students are different from science students both in their English language level and educational background, it is necessary to do more research involving students from Humanities and Arts and Education.

3) More research needs to be done with foreign students of other cultures, such as other Asian groups or European students whose native language is not English in order to make a comparison between two groups of ESL students with different cultural backgrounds. In this way the language proficiency level of the subjects could be controlled.

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APPENDIX A

LISTENING COMPREHENSION TESTS

The Informal Version of the Spring Festival Dialogue

John : Hi, Mary.

Mary: Hey, John. How was the holiday?

John : Great! It was a blast! We went back to my wife's home town near Harbin in China .

Mary: What did you do there?

John: Well, a few days before the festival, we bought colored paper and my wife fixed up the doors and windows with papercuts and the Chinese character for "luck". Then we picked up all this great stuff to eat an' drink, like chicken, eggs, pork, beef, fish, vegetables, fruit, candies, beer, wine and yuanxiao, um, a kind of Chinese food. You should've seen the food markets when we went. Packed like sardines.

Mary: I hear Chinese food is pretty scary stuff to cook right.

John: Yeah, for instance, take jiaozi .

Mary: What? Jia-o-zi?

John: Looks like dumplings, a special food for this festival. On the eve of the festival, the whole family got together for a special dinner. We all helped cook. I chopped pork and Chinese cabbage, my wife rolled out dough to make jiaozi skins and the rest of the family helped stuff the jiaozi skins. Then the whole family sat down to chaw down and I made a pig of myself.

Mary: Sounds like our Christmas when the whole family gets together.

John : You're right. But the difference is their dinner goes on and on and they watch the tube while they eat.

Mary: I bet there's some real interesting stuff on the tube.

John : Yeah, they had a holiday special that night with the hottest movie stars, singers, and dancers.

Mary: What kinds of stuff did they do?

John : A lot of things.The best one was the cross talk by Jiang Kuen.He was hilarious. I freaked out right there.

Mary: What's cross talk?

John: You have two comedians: one plays it straight while the other gets all the funny lines.

Mary: What about the movie stars?

John: You know Liu Xiaoqing? She's the hottest actress in China right now. She and the others sang and danced on the show.

Mary: Ah, sounds neat.

John : The program went on for quite a while. Before midnight, a huge clock appeared on the screen. When it struck 12, zillions of firecrackers exploded all over the place and we all rushed outside to join in the mayhem.

Mary: Bet everybody had a blast.

John : You bet! That was the most exciting moment of the whole festival. After the fireworks died down, we went back in to finish our jiaozi and to catch the end of the program.

Mary: Sounds like a heck of a night. How long does the festival last?

John : Well, about a couple of weeks. I remember the day before the festival was over, I made some lanterns for my friends' kids. They walked around with other kids in the neighborhood all night. The lanterns looked wild in the dark, flashing red, blue, green and yellow.

Mary: Must of been incredible! Sounds like a great party. I'll have to think of hopping on a plane next year and catching some of the action myself.

John : Mary, you'll love it.

The Formal Version of the Spring Festival Dialogue

John: Hello, Dr. Brown.

Brown: Hello, John. How was your holiday?

John: It was great! We went back to my wife's home town near Harbin in China.

Brown: How did you spend your holiday there?

John: We had a lot of fun. Several days before the festival, we bought colored paper and my wife decorated the doors and windows with papercuts and the Chinese character for "luck". Then we bought all kinds of good things to eat and drink, such as chicken, eggs, pork, beef, fish, vegetables, yuanxiao, which is a kind of Chinese food. We also bought fruit, candies, beer, and wine. The food markets were packed during that time.

Brown: I hear Chinese cooking is very complicated.

John: Yes, take jiaozi for instance.

Brown: What is "jia-o-zi"?

John: They look like dumplings. This is a special food for this festival. The evening before the festival, the whole family got together for a special dinner. Then we all helped to cook. I chopped pork and Chinese cabbage, my wife rolled out dough to make jiaozi shells , and the rest of the family helped to stuff the jiaozi shells. Then the whole family sat down around the table to the feast and I ate so much I thought I would explode.

Brown: It's like our Christmas when the whole family gets together.

John: That's right. But the difference is that their dinner goes on and on and they watch TV while they eat.

Brown: Oh, there must be very interesting programs on TV.

John: You're right. There was a special show on TV that night with the most popular movie stars, singers, and dancers.

Brown: What kinds of performances did they give?

John: Many kinds. The best one was the crosstalk by Jiang Kuen. His jokes were so funny that I couldn't stop laughing.

Brown: What is crosstalk?

John: It's a kind of comic dialogue on the stage when you have two comedians: one plays it straight while the other gets all the funny lines.

Brown: Oh, I see. What did the movie stars do?

John: You know Liu Xiaoqing? She's the most famous movie star in China right now. She and the other stars sang and danced.

Brown: Oh, I see. No wonder the show was so popular.

John: The show went on for hours. Before midnight, a giant clock appeared on the screen. When it struck 12, firecrackers exploded everywhere and we all ran out of the house to join in the festivities.

Brown: People must have had a lot of fun.

John: Yes. Actually, that was the climax of the whole festival. After the fireworks died down, we went back in to finish our jiaozi and to watch the end of the TV program.

Brown: Sounds like it was a really exciting night. How long does this festival last?

John: Well, it lasts about half a month. The day before the festival was over, I made some lanterns for my friends' children. They carried lanterns with other children in the neighborhood all night. The lanterns had all kinds of colors, red, blue, green, yellow, and they looked great in the dark night.

Brown: It must have been a beautiful sight! There seem to be so many interesting activities during the festival. Next year I'd love to go to China for the celebrations.

John: I think you would really enjoy it very much.

The Informal Version of the Easter Dialogue

John: Hi Mary.

Mary: Hey John. How was your holiday?

John: Great! It was a blast!

Mary: What didya do?

John: Ah..well, on Friday evening we went to church. Then we had to split for home to load our Chevvie for a trip the next day.

Mary: Oh, where didya go?

John: Burned out to my Aunt Nellie's and Uncle Bob's farm near Winnipeg. That's where most of my family lives. We hung around there for a couple of days an' came back yesterday.

Mary: What didya do there?

John: Saturday we went house-hopping 'cause each relative wanted us to visit their place. I pigged out all day and felt like hell afterwards.

Mary: How about the egg decorating? Didya do any?

John: Yeah. On Saturday night we dyed lots of 'em .... turned out fantastic. I'll bring some back for ya. What about you? I hear you guys are great at this kind of stuff.

Mary: Yeah, I did it in a more scary way. I drew designs with wax on the eggs and then dyed them several times in different colors. How didya do yours?

John: I hard-boiled 'em and then helped my nephews and nieces dye them and then we put 'em on the dining room table. To top it off we also put flowers beside them.

Mary: Hum, sounds neat! Didya go to church on Sunday?

John: Sure, we got up real early that day and went to church. The church was really decked out. It was a neat service. We didn't eat a thing that morning. After church, we had some hot

cross buns, eggs and toast for brunch. You should've seen the egg cups my Aunt Nelly had. They were outrageous. Some of 'em were shaped like chicks and some like rabbits! What didya do?

Mary: Well, we didn't eat breakfast, but took a basket of food to church. After the priest blessed the basket, we took it home and ate all the food in it. Then we started an egg hunt.

John: Yeah same here! My nephews and nieces looked like crazy for the chocolate eggs I hid the night before. The house was crawling with 'em. After they found 'em, they put 'em in these neat baskets I made for 'em. Then I helped the kids put the baskets on the mantelpiece and wrote their names on 'em so that they wouldn't mix 'em up. Aunt Nellie gave a prize to the one who dug out the most.

Mary: Great! Didya do anything special after this?

John: Well, a lot of the family came over for supper. The girls did the cooking in the kitchen and the guys were couch potatoes parked in front of the tube watching sports.

Mary: Didya pig out?

John: Yeah! Aunt Nellie put on an awesome spread. We had a lot of ham'n'trimmings, squash, mashed potatoes and corn. For dessert, somebody brought a neat apple pie and a cool-looking cake. After supper, granny gave us each a treat.

Mary: What cha get ?

John: Wanna guess? Oh, I gotta run. Catch ya later.

The Formal Version of the Easter Dialogue

John: Hello, Dr. Brown.

Brown: Hello, John. How was your holiday?

John: It was great! I had lots of fun.

Brown : What did you do during the holiday?

John: Well, we went to church on Friday evening. Then we had to hurry home and pack things in the car for a trip the next day.

Brown: Oh, where did you go?

John: On Saturday we drove out to my Aunt Nellie's and Uncle Bob's farm near Winnipeg. Most of my family lives near there. I stayed there for two days and came back yesterday.

Brown: What did you do when you got there?

John: All day Saturday we visited lots of relatives. We had a meal at each house, and I ate so much I thought I would explode.

Brown: How about your egg decorating skills? Did you decorate any during the holiday?

John: Sure, we colored lots of them on Saturday night. They looked very nice. I hear you people are excellent at decorating eggs. Did you color eggs this year?

Brown: Sure. I helped my children draw designs on the eggs with wax and then dye them several times in different colors. How did you color yours?

John: First I hard-boiled the eggs. Then I helped my nephews and nieces dye the eggs. Then we put them on the dining room table for decoration along with some flowers.

Brown: Sounds great! What did you do on Sunday?

John: We got up very early and went to church. The church was specially decorated. It was a very nice service. We didn't eat anything in the morning. When we came back from church, we

had hot cross buns, eggs and toast for brunch. My Aunt Nellie had beautiful egg cups. Some of them were in the shape of baby chickens and some in the shape of rabbits!

Brown: That's somewhat different from what we did. We didn't eat breakfast but took a basket of food to the church. After the priest blessed the basket we took the basket home and ate what was in it. Then the kids started an egg hunt.

John: We did the same. My nephews and nieces searched for the chocolate eggs I had hidden the night before all over the house. They put the eggs in baskets after they found them. I helped them put the baskets on the mantelpiece over the fireplace. The baskets had their names on them so they wouldn't confuse them. Aunt Nellie gave a prize to the one who found the most eggs.

Brown: Did you do anything special after this game?

John: Well, a lot of our family came over for supper. The women did the cooking in the kitchen and the men sat on the couch watching sports on TV.

Brown: You must have had a big dinner.

John: You're right. My Aunt Nellie put out a really great buffet. We had a lot of ham and trimmings, squash, mashed potatoes and corn. For dessert, we had apple pie and cake. After supper, my grandma gave us each a treat.

Brown: What did you get ?

John: Oh I'm going to be late. Can I talk to you later?

Brown: Sure. See you later.

Multiple-Choice Questions for the Informal Version of the Spring Festival Dialogue

Part One (Explicit Questions):

1. John agreed that the Chinese food is
   a. easy to cook
   b. difficult to cook
   c. tasty
   d. expensive
   e. cheap

2. What kind of show did Liu Xiaoqing give?
   a. made a lot of jokes
   b. gave a dance
   c. sang a modern song
   d. sang a piece of Beijing Opera
   e. Both B and C

3. According to John, how long does the festival last?
   a. about one month
   b. about one month and a half
   c. about half a month
   d. about a week
   e. about three weeks

4. According to John, the food market
   a. was selling sardines
   b. was full of people
   c. was full of seafood
   d. was full of all kinds of food
   e. smelled like fish

5. While John ate supper, he was
   a. playing with a tube
   b. watching a special show on TV
   c. helping to cook
   d. talking about Christmas
   e. talking about sports

6. Which of the following food did not appear ~~on John~~'s shopping list?
   a. beef
   b. fish
   c. chicken
   d. pork
   e. ham

7. What did John do on the day before the festival was over ?
   a. carry lanterns everywhere
   b. watch the special program on TV
   c. set off firecrackers
   d. make lanterns
   e. eat the family reunion dinner

8. According to John, which of the following was the most exciting event he experienced during the festival celebrations?
   a. the clock striking 12
   b. setting off firecrackers
   c. making lanterns
   d. carrying lanterns
   e. drinking wine at the family reunion dinner

9. According to Mary, in what respect is Christmas in her country similar to the festival they are talking about?
   a. decorating homes
   b. singing songs
   c. watching special TV programs
   d. eating a big dinner
   e. family's getting together

10. Mary is so attracted by John's experience that she
   a. would like to celebrate the festival in China Town next year
   b. would like to go to China
   c. would like to try some Chinese food
   d. could hardly believe her ears
   e. none of the above

Part Two (Implicit Questions):

11. In which province did John spend his holiday?
    a. Harbin
    b. Heilongjiang
    c. Shanghai
    d. Guangdong
    e. Sichuan

12. In which part of China did John stay during the holiday?
    a. east
    b. northeast
    c. north
    d. south
    e. center

13. What color of paper did John's wife most likely buy?
    a. green
    b. red
    c. yellow
    d. blue
    e. white

14. How long did the Special TV program last?
    a. from 8 p.m. to 12 a.m.
    b. from 5 p.m. to 2 a.m.
    c. from 5 p.m. to 5 a.m.
    d. from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m.
    e. from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m.

15. Who was most likely setting off firecrackers?
    a. foreign tourists
    b. children
    c. people employed to do this job
    d. movie stars
    e. famous singers and dancers

16. Which festival are the two speakers mainly talking about?
    a. Dragon Boat Festival
    b. Chinese Hallowe'en
    c. Chinese Christmas
    d. Chinese Thanksgiving Day
    e. the Spring Festival

17. When is this festival celebrated?
    a. in March or April
    b. in May or June
    c. in July or August
    d. in November or December
    e. in January or February

18. What is the other name for this festival?
    a. the Chinese May Day
    b. the Chinese New Year
    c. the Chinese National Day
    d. Mother's Day
    e. the Lantern Festival

19. Which of the following styles is used in the dialogue?
    a. very informal
    b. informal
    c. semi-formal
    d. formal
    e. extremely formal

20. From the dialogue, what kind of relationship do you think exists between the two speakers?
    a. sister and brother
    b. friends
    c. boss-employee
    d. teacher-student
    e. none of the above

Multiple-Choice Questions for the Semi-formal Version of the Spring Festival Dialogue

Part One (Explicit Questions)

1. John agreed that the Chinese food is
   a. easy to cook
   b. difficult to cook
   c. tasty
   d. expensive
   e. cheap

2. What kind of show did Liu Xiaoqing give?
   a. made a lot of jokes
   b. gave a dance
   c. sang a modern song
   d. sang a piece of Beijing Opera
   e. Both B and C

3. According to John, how long does the festival last?
   a. about one month
   b. about one month and a half
   c. about half a month
   d. about a week
   e. about three weeks

4. According to John, the food market
   a. was selling sardines
   b. was full of people
   c. was full of seafood
   d. was full of all kinds of food
   e. smelled like fish

5. While John ate supper, he was
   a. playing with a tube
   b. watching a special show on TV
   c. helping to cook
   d. talking about Christmas
   e. talking about sports

6. Which of the following food did <u>not</u> appear on John's shopping list?
   a. beef
   b. fish
   c. chicken
   d. pork
   e. ham

7. What did John do on the day before the festival was over ?
   a. carry lanterns everywhere
   b. watch the special program on TV
   c. set off firecrackers
   d. make lanterns
   e. eat the family reunion dinner

8. According to John, which of the following was the most exciting event he experienced during the festival celebrations?
   a. the clock striking 12
   b. setting off firecrackers
   c. making lanterns
   d. carrying lanterns
   e. drinking wine at the family reunion dinner

9. According to Dr. Brown, in what respect is Christmas in her country similar to the festival they are talking about?
   a. decorating homes
   b. singing songs
   c. watching special TV programs
   d. eating a big dinner
   e. family's getting together

10. Dr. Brown is so attracted by John's experience that she
   a. would like to celebrate the festival in China Town next year
   b. would like to go to China
   c. would like to try some Chinese food
   d. could hardly believe her ears
   e. none of the above

Part Two (Implicit Questions):

11. In which province did John spend his holiday?
    a. Harbin
    b. Heilongjiang
    c. Shanghai
    d. Guangdong
    e. Sichuan

12. In which part of China did John stay during the holiday?
    a. east
    b. northeast
    c. north
    d. south
    e. center

13. What color of paper did John's wife most likely buy?
    a. green
    b. red
    c. yellow
    d. blue
    e. white

14. How long did the Special TV program last?
    a. from 8 p.m. to 12 a.m.
    b. from 5 p.m. to 2 a.m.
    c. from 5 p.m. to 5 a.m.
    d. from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m.
    e. from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m.

15. Who was most likely setting off firecrackers?
    a. foreign tourists
    b. children
    c. people employed to do this job
    d. movie stars
    e. famous singers and dancers

16. Which festival are the two speakers mainly talking about?
    a. Dragon Boat Festival
    b. Chinese Hallowe'en
    c. Chinese Christmas
    d. Chinese Thanksgiving Day
    e. the Spring Festival

17. When is this festival celebrated?
    a. in March or April
    b. in May or June
    c. in July or August
    d. in November or December
    e. in January or February

18. What is the other name for this festival?
    a. the Chinese May Day
    b. the Chinese New Year
    c. the Chinese National Day
    d. Mother's Day
    e. the Lantern Festival

19. Which of the following styles is used in the dialogue?
    a. very informal
    b. informal
    c. semi-formal
    d. formal
    e. extremely formal

20. From the dialogue, what kind of relationship do you think exists between the two speakers?
    a. sister and brother
    b. friends
    c. boss-employee
    d. teacher-student
    e. none of the above

Multiple-Choice Questions for the Easter Dialogue:

Part One (Explicit Questions):

1. What did John do after church on Friday?
   a. went to a gas station
   b. went home
   c. went to his aunt's farm
   d. loaded his car for camping
   e. loaded his motor-home for camping

2. How did John prepare his eggs?
   a. by boiling them hard
   b. by drawing designs on them
   c. by soaking them in dye
   d. Both A and B
   e. Both A and C

3. John's nephews and nieces
   a. looked very upset during their egg hunt.
   b. looked very angry during their egg hunt.
   c. looked for the eggs eagerly.
   d. went crazy for not being able to find any eggs.
   e. spent a lot of time looking for the eggs.

4. What did John do on Saturday ?
   a. went out to have a picnic
   b. ate too much
   c. hunted for eggs
   d. watched the movie "Like Hell" on TV
   e. went to church

5. John's aunt had some egg cups in the shape of
   a. puppies and rabbits
   b. kittens and chicks
   c. puppies and chicks
   d. chicks and rabbits
   e. rabbits and kittens

6. Which of the following did John not eat on Saturday?
   a. hot cross buns
   b. ham
   c. eggs
   d. toast
   e. Both B and D

7. What did the men do while the women were cooking?
   a. ate potato chips
   b. parked the car in front of the house
   c. watched TV
   d. played with a tube
   e. sat on the couch talking

8. Which did John not have for supper on Sunday?
   a. ham
   b. turkey
   c. squash
   d. corn
   e. mashed potatoes

9. What would John most likely have for dessert?
   a. apple pudding and cake
   b. cake and pie
   c. an apple and pie
   d. an apple and cake
   e. apple pudding and pie

10. Which of the following is true?
   a. John had to catch his bus
   b. John wanted to do some running
   c. John was too busy to continue the conversation
   d. John had run into some trouble
   e. none of the above

Part Two (Implicit Questions):

11. Which of the following did John's nephews and nieces most likely believe had hidden the chocolate eggs?
    a. John
    b. John's mom
    c. a chicken
    d. a rabbit
    e. the Infant Jesus

12. What kind of flowers did John most likely put on the table?
    a. roses
    b. lilacs
    c. violets
    d. lilies
    e. lotuses

13. Eggs are associated with this holiday because they are
    a. a symbol of a family reunion
    b. a symbol of the birth of Christ
    c. a symbol of new life
    d. a symbol of the crucifixion of Christ
    e. Both B and C

14. Which of the following styles is used in the dialogue?
    a. very informal
    b. informal
    c. semi-formal
    d. formal
    e. extremely formal

15. From the dialogue, what kind of relationship do you think exists between the two speakers?
    a. relatives
    b. friends
    c. boss-employee
    d. teacher-student
    e. none of the above

16. On Sunday the church John went to was decorated most likely with
    a. red
    b. blue
    c. white
    d. purple
    e. yellow

17. Which of the following sports were the men mostly likely watching?
    a. football game
    b. soccer game
    c. baseball game
    d. water skiing
    e. basketball game

18. When did this conversation most likely take place?
    a. in January or February
    b. in March or April
    c. in April or May
    d. in June or July
    e. in May or June

19. In which province did John spend his holiday?

a. Newfoundland
b. New Brunswick
c. Prince Edward Island
d. Manitoba
e. Ontario

20. Which holiday are the two speakers talking about?

a. Christmas
b. Thanksgiving
c. Easter
d. Hallowe'en
e. St. Valentine's Day

APPENDIX B

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONNAIRE

Debriefing Questionnaire

1. Major:
2. Department:
3. When did you come to Canada?
4. Indicate on a 1 - 5 scale how much of the information in the dialogue was familiar to you before you listened to it. (1= all of it, 5= none of it) Please circle the appropriate number for each dialogue.

Dialogue 1:	1	2	3	4	5
Dialogue 2:	1	2	3	4	5

5. After finishing the task for each dialogue,please indicate the degree of difficulty of each dialogue in terms of grammar, content, vocabulary, and overall organization .

(1=very easy, 5= very difficult)

Dialogue 1:	a) grammar	1	2	3	4	5
	b) vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
	c) content	1	2	3	4	5
	d) overall organization	1	2	3	4	5
Dialogue 2:	a) grammar	1	2	3	4	5
	b) vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
	c) content	1	2	3	4	5
	d) overall organization	1	2	3	4	5

6. Which dialogue(s) did you find more difficult?

___Dialogue One ___Dialogue Two

Why did you find this difficult?

____a) I am not familiar with the cultural content.

____b) I am not familiar with the accent.

____c) I am not familiar with certain vocabulary in them.

____d) The speech is too fast.

____e) The speech is not clear.

____f) I am not familiar with some slang and colloquial expressions in the dialogue

7. Which dialogue did find easier to understand?

___Dialogue One ___Dialogue Two

Why did you find this dialogue easier?

____ a) I am familiar with the cultural content.

____ b) I am familiar with the accent.

____ c) The speech is clear.

____ d) The speech is slower.

____ f) Because I am familiar with the content, some slang and colloquial expressions didn't hinder me from comprehension of the dialogue

APPENDIX C

BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE CHINESE SUBJECTS

March 15, 1989

Dear Chinese Scholars:

As a graduate student in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language, I have undertaken to write a thesis on "The Effects of Cultural Background Knowledge and Language Styles on ESL Listening Comprehension". This questionnaire is designed to obtain information as to your English language learning experience both in China and Canada and how you feel about the role of learning of culture and everyday informal English in improving listening comprehension. This information is to help to interpret the results of the previous listening comprehension tests. Please be as frank as possible in your answers because only in this way can we get a true idea about how ESL students feel about the learning of culture and colloquial English.

I realize that there are many demands on your time and thus I attach great value to your help and cooperation. Needless to say, your answers will help to gain significant insight as to how to improve listening comprehension for the Chinese students studying both in China and abroad. Please feel free to make any comments as you wish. They will be greatly appreciated.

As I have mentioned to you earlier, I promise to keep your answers strictly confidential and the information you give me will be used only for the purpose of this study. None of your names will be mentioned in this research and all the identifying information will be destroyed before the statistical analysis is carried out.

To facilitate the return of the questionnaire, I have enclosed an envelope with my name and address. Please return the questionnaire by campus mail. If you have any questions, please phone me at 433-1699

(home) or 492-2902 (office).

Looking forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you very much for your support.

P.S. Please return the questionnaire by the end of March.

Sincerely Yours,

Kuo Hsiaohung

Kuo Hsiaohung

Questionnaire Section 1: General Information

1. Age_____ Sex _____
2. Place of Birth _____
3. City where you spent most of the time _____
4. What foreign languages other than English can you read?
   Russian___ Japanese___ French___ German____ other _____
5. Have you been to any other foreign country other than Canada?
   Yes__ No___.
   If so, which one(s) and for how long? _____.
6. You received your Bachelor's degree in China in 19___.
   your Master's degree in China in 19___.
   your Ph.D. degree in China in 19___.
7. Your major for your Bachelor's (in China) is _____.
   for your Master's (in China) is _____.
   for your Ph. D degree (in China) is _____.
8. Which program are you in now in Canada?
   ___Ph. D ___Master's ___ Visiting scholar
9. The department in which you are now studying is _____.
10. Your major here is _____.
11. You arrived in Canada in _____(month) in 19____(year).
12. Which test on English proficiency did you take before you came here?
    ____TOEFL ___EPT(English Proficiency Test)
    ____MTELP (Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency)

Questionnaire Section 2: Information about Learning English in China

1. You began to learn English in China in 19____
2. You studied English in China for _____ years altogether.
3. In which cities and provinces did you learn English in China?
   Please fill in Table 1 to answer the above question.

Table 1

School	Province	City	Length of time
Junior High			19___ to 19 ___
Senior High			19___ to 19 ___
University			19___ to 19 ___
English Program for going abroad			19___ to 19 ___
Others (specify)			19___ to 19 ___

4. How many hours per week did you spend on English courses?
5. How many hours per week on the average did you spend on studying English on your own (not as a part of a course)?
   Please fill in Table 2 to answer Question 4 and 5.

Table 2

School	hours per week for English courses	hours per week for self-study
Junior High		
Senior High		
University		
English Program for going abroad		
Others		

6. Please describe how you studied English

a) on your own _____

b) in high schools_____

c) in university _____

d) in the English program for going abroad_____

How satisfied are you with the way of learning English which you used?

_____

7. Were you taught by teachers who were native speakers of English in your English courses?

yes __ no ___

If yes, please go to Question 8.

8. Which countries did these teachers come from?

1) _____ 2) _____ 3)_____4) _____

9. If your teacher was a Chinese, what language did your teacher use for English class instruction?

_____a) Chinese only

_____b) English only

_____c) sometimes Chinese and sometimes English (please indicate the percentage of each in Table 3

Table 3

School	Chinese used percentage of	percentage of English used
Junior high	%	%
Senior high	%	%
University	%	%
English program for going abroad	%	%
others (specify)	%	%

10. How many times per week were you involved in the following activities in your English courses ? Place an X in the appropriate column.

	Never	1 -2 times	3-5 times	5-10 times
a) listening to English program on radio	___	___	___	___
b) watching television programs in English	___	___	___	___

c) seeing English films about daily life of English speaking people ___ ___ ___ ___

d) seeing films about the art and literature of English speaking people ___ ___ ___ ___

e) listening to a tape recorder ___ ___ ___ ___

11. Did you find these activities helped you a lot in improving your listening comprehension?

____A lot ____ somewhat ____not at all

12. Please indicate whether you were Very Familiar, Somewhat Familiar, or Unfamiliar with each of the following areas when you were in China. (1= very familiar, 2= somewhat familiar, 3= unfamiliar) Place an X in the appropriate column.

	1	2	3
a) Christmas celebration in English speaking countries	___	___	___
b) Easter celebration in English speaking countries	___	___	___
c) Thanksgiving in North America.	___	___	___
d) Hallowe'en in North America	___	___	___
e) St Valentine's Day in English speaking countries	___	___	___
f) grocery shopping in Canada	___	___	___
g) eating habits in Canada	___	___	___
h) major sports in Canada	___	___	___
j) popular music in Canada	___	___	___
k) family relationship in Canada	___	___	___

13. Do you think the cultural content about English speaking countries given in the textbooks in English classes is:

___a) more than adequate

___b) adequate

___c) somewhat unsatisfactory

___d) inadequate

___e) totally inadequate

14. Please respond to the following statements concerning the teaching of culture of English speaking countries in English classes in China.

a) We had enough classroom time for the study of culture of English speaking people.

___strongly agree ___agree ___disagree ___strongly disagree

b) We had enough teaching materials about culture, e.g. textbooks, pictures, recording, video program etc.

___strongly agree ___agree ___disagree ___strongly disagree

c) Teachers were familiar with the culture of English speaking countries.

___strongly agree ___agree ___disagree ___strongly disagree

d) Teachers were interested in teaching the culture of English speaking countries.

___strongly agree ___agree ___disagree___strongly disagree

f) Students were interested in learning the culture of English speaking countries.

___strongly agree __agree __disagree __strongly disagree

15. How important do you think the study of culture in language learning is?

___a) interesting but not important

___b) very important to the understanding of the language being studied

___c) not as important as other language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

16. To what extent were you exposed to everyday informal English in your English class in China?

a) seldom b) somewhat c) often d) quite often

17. How important do you think the study of everyday informal English?

a) not important b) somewhat important c) important

d) very important

Section 3 Information about Your Experience in Canada

1. Have you ever lived with Canadian people here?

___Yes ___ No

If yes, how long? _____

If no, do you live with people who speak the same Chinese dialects that you speak?

2. Do you speak English outside the classroom?

___Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom

3. Do you listen to radio programs in English?

___Often ___Sometimes ___ Seldom

4. Do you watch English language TV or English movies here?

___Often ___Sometimes ___Seldom

5. Do you read Chinese language newspapers

a) more often than English language ones?

b) the same amount as English language ones?

c) less often than English language ones?

6. Are you a member of Chinese-Canadian Peer Pairing Program? If No, go to Question 10 and 11.

___Yes __No

7. If Yes, how often do you meet and talk with your Canadian peer each month?

___ once or twice ____three or four times

___ more than five times

8. Do you find your partner has given a lot of cultural orientation?

___A lot ___Some ___little ___none

9. Does this program help you to improve your listening comprehension when you talk with people?

___A lot ___Somewhat ___little ___not at all

10. Do you have many Canadian friends or acquaintances whom you talk to occasionally?

___ one or two ___three to five ___more than five

11. Do you find your Canadian friends help you in understanding of the culture here?

__a lot __somewhat __not at all

12. Did you have difficulties in understanding English when you first arrived in Canada?

If yes, to what extent do you think the reasons below apply? (1 = strongly agree 5=strongly disagree)

a) I was not familiar with the accent.

__1 __2 __3 __4 __5

b) People talk too fast.

__1 __2 __3 __4 __5

c) I was not familiar with the culture here.

__1 __2 __3 __4 __5

d) My vocabulary was not large enough.

__1 __2 __3 __4 __5

e) I was not familiar with some colloquial expressions and slang used in everyday informal English.

__1 __2 __3 __4 __5

f) I had difficulty in understanding when Canadian people omitted some sounds in some words when they talked informally.

__1 __2 __3 __4 __5

If there were other reasons for the problems you had, please describe them.

_____

_____.

13. Do you still have difficulties in understanding English now? If so, please describe the problems you have.

_____

_____ _____.

APPENDIX D

BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE CANADIAN SUBJECTS

Questionnaire for Canadian subjects

1. Age___ Sex____
2. Place of Birth _____
3. What language(s) do you know other than English? Please list them.
4. Which program are you in?

___Ph. D ___ Master's ___undergraduate (which year? ___)

___after degree ___other(please specify)

5. Which dialogue(s) did you find more difficult? Why?

___Dialogue One ___Dialogue Two

_____

_____

6. Which dialogue(s) did find easier to understand? Why?

___a) Dialogue One ___b) Dialogue Two

_____

_____

7. Do you have any Chinese friends or acquaintances?

___none ___ one or two ___ three to five __ more than five

8. If you have Chinese friends, have you celebrated Chinese New Year with them?

__Yes ___No

If so, where? __in Mainland China __in Canada

__other places (specify)

9. Have you ever been to Mainland China? ___Yes ___No

If so, a) How long did you stay there? _____

b) In which city did you stay? _____

10. Do you visit China Town?

___Often ____Sometimes ___Seldom ___Never

11. Do you eat Chinese food?

___ Often ___Sometimes ___Seldom ___Never

12. Do you know the Chinese language? __Yes __No

If yes, how long have you studied? _____

Which dialect of Chinese? _____

13. Which culture do you belong to?

___a) Ukrainian-Canadian __b) French-Canadian

___c) German- Canadian __d) Spanish- Canadian

___e)British-Canadian ___f) other (please specify)_____.

14. Are you familiar with the slang used in these two dialogues?

__1) very familiar __2) somewhat familiar __3) not familiar

APPENDIX E

TABLES FOR THE ANALYSIS OF BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE CHINESE SUBJECTS

Table 44

Year in Which the Chinese Subjects Began to Learn English

	Number of Subjects	Percentage
1958	1	2.5%
1964	1	2.5%
1970-1974	6	15.0%
1975-1979	28	70.0%

Table 45

Number of the Chinese Subjects Who Had Been Taught by Native Speakers of English

	Number of Subjects	Percentage
American Teachers	17	42.5%
British	2	5.0%
Canadian	2	5.0%
Unknown	1	2.5%

Table 47

The Chinese Subjects' Report of Hours per Week for English Courses in China

	Number of Subjects	Percentage
2 - 4 Hours	28	70.0%
6 - 10 Hours	8	20.0%

Table 48

The Chinese Subjects' Report of Amount of English Used in English Class in China

	Number of Subjects	Percentage
0 % - 25 %	25	62.5%
40 % - 80 %	15	37.5%

Table 49

The Chinese Subjects' Perception of the Extent to Which They Were Involved in Certain Cultural Activities in Their English Class in China

Frequencies and Percentage (in parentheses)

	Never	1-2 Times	3-5 Times	5-10 Times
a) listening to English programs on the radio	7(17.5)	15(37.5)	11(27.5)	3(7.5)
b) watching television programs in English	9(22.5)	21(52.5)	3(7.5)	1(2.5)
c) seeing English films about the daily life of English speaking people	22(55.0)	13(32.5)		
d) seeing films about the art and literature of English speaking people	23(57.5)	7(17.5)		
e) listening to a tape recorder	3(7.5)	18(45.0)	10(25.0)	2(5.0)

Table 50

The Chinese Subjects' Self-Assessment of the Degree of Their Familiarity With Certain Cultural Aspects of English-Speaking Countries When They Were in China

Frequencies and Percentage (in parentheses)

	Very Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Unfamiliar
Celebration of Christmas	6 (15.0)	28 (70.0)	6 (15.0)
Celebration of Easter	2 (5.0)	7 (17.5)	31 (77.5)
Thanksgiving in North America	4 (10.0)	18 (45.0)	18 (45.0)
Hallowe'en in North America	1 (2.5)	8 (20.0)	31 (77.5)
St Valentine's day	1 (2.5)	8 (20.0)	31 (77.5)
Grocery Shopping in Canada	3 (7.5)	6 (15.0)	31 (77.5)
Eating Habits in Canada	1 (2.5)	12 (30.0)	27 (67.5)
Major Sports in Canada		19 (47.5)	21 (52.5)
Popular Music in Canada		4 (10.0)	36 (90.0)
Family relationship in Canada		12 (30.0)	28 (70.0)

Table 51

The Chinese Subjects' Degree of Satisfaction with Cultural Content Given in Their English Class

	Frequency	Percentage
more than adequate	0.0	0.0
adequate	4.0	10.0
somewhat unsatisfactory	14.0	35.0
inadequate	16.0	40.0
totally inadequate	6.0	15.0

Table 52

The Chinese Subjects' Perception of the Availability of Teaching Materials and Class Time Devoted to the Teaching of Culture in English Class

Frequencies and Percentage (in parentheses)

	Had Enough Class Time	Had Enough Teaching Material
strongly agree	1 (2.5)	0 (0.0)
agree	3 (7.5)	8 (20.0)
disagree	24 (60.0)	21 (52.5)
strongly disagree	12 (30.0)	10 (25.0)

Table 53

The Chinese Subjects' Perception of their Teachers' Background in Terms of the Teaching of Culture

	Teachers were familiar with the culture of English speaking countries
strongly agree	0 (0.0)
agree	9 (22.5)
disagree	22 (55.0)
strongly disagree	7 (17.5)

Table 54

The Chinese Subjects' Degree of Interest in Learning About Culture

	Students were interested in learning culture
strongly agree	2 (5.0)
agree	30 (75.0)
disagree	4 (10.0)
strongly disagree	2 (5.0)

Table 55

Number of Chinese Subjects Who Have Lived with the Canadian People

Frequencies and Percentage (in parentheses)

Have lived with Canadian People	Have Not Lived with Canadian People
7(17.5)	33 (82.5)

Table 56

The Chinese Subjects' Length of Stay with Canadians

	Frequencies	Percentage
less than one month	2	28.6
3 - 4 months	3	42.8
6 - 7 months	2	28.6

Table 57

The Chinese Subjects' Activities to Improve Their English Listening and Speaking Skills

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom
Speaking English outside class	4 (10.0)	27(67.5)	9(22.5)
Listening to English program on radio	8 (20.0)	21(52.5)	11(27.5)
Watching TV in English	19(47.5)	16(40.0)	5(12.5)

Table 58

Extent to Which the Chinese Subjects Read English-Language Newspapers

	Number of subjects	Percentage
Reading Chinese newspapers more often than English ones	19	47.5
Reading Chinese newspapers the same amount as English ones	9	22.5
Reading Chinese newspapers less often than English ones	12	30.0

Table 59

Extent of the Chinese Subjects' Contact with Canadians through Programs and Clubs

a) Number of subjects who Joined the programs

	Number of subjects	Percentage
1) Members of Chinese-Canadian Peer-Pairing Program	20	50.0
2) Chinese-Canadian Student Dialogue Club	1	2.5

b) Frequency of contact with peers per month

	Number of subjects	Percentage
Once or twice	18	85.7
Three to five times	2	9.5
More than five times	1	4.8

Table 61

The Chinese Subjects' English Language Problems upon Arrival in Canada

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Response	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I was not familiar with the accent	8(20.0)	10(25.0)	11(27.5)	5(12.5)	1(2.5)
People talked too fast	12(30.0)	17(42.5)	4(10.0)	4(10.0)	0(0.00)
I was not familiar with Canadian Culture	8.(20.0)	13(32.5)	12(30.0)	3(7.5)	1(2.5)
My vocabulary was not large enough	10(25.0)	13(32.5)	7(17.5)	4(10.0)	3(7.5)
I was not familiar with slang and colloquialisms	13(32.5)	14(35.0)	8(20.0)	1(2.5)	1(2.5)
I had difficulty when people omitted some sounds	10(25.0)	16(40.0)	7(17.5)	2(5.0)	2(5.0)